

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Council **DATE:** 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2018

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Community Governance Review Group  
Catherine Meek, Head of Democratic Services

**(For all enquiries)** (01753) 875011

**WARDS:** All

### **PART 1**

### **FOR DECISION**

## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF SLOUGH**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report outlines the responses to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the public consultation carried out as part of the community governance review of the Borough Council area and the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Group.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Council is requested to consider the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Group and determine whether to Resolve:

#### **Britwell Parish Council**

1. That the results of the advisory postal poll, the representations made by Britwell Parish Council and the written responses received during the consultation be noted.
2. That in light of the response to the consultation and findings of the Review as set out at paragraph 5.14 of this report, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be called on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 to determine the abolition of Britwell Parish Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019.
3. That, in the event recommendations 1 and 2 above are approved, the Director of Finance and Resources be requested to prepare:
  - a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Britwell Parish Council will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition;
  - a draft order for the abolition of the Britwell Parish Council and the Civil Parish to take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019, and
  - a timetable of consequential actions.

## **Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council**

1. That the written responses received in relation to Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be noted.
2. That the results of the advisory postal poll on whether the parish council is effective and engages effectively with local people be noted.
3. That the parish council be urged to give consideration to the views expressed via the poll and improve its engagement with local people with an emphasis on the Westfield/Brands Hill area (PD CPA), where the poll demonstrated lower levels of public support.
4. That the borough council will review the parish's performance again toward the end of its next term of office and reserves the right to test public opinion in a further advisory postal poll if it is not satisfied that it is engaging widely with local people.

## **Wexham Court Parish Council**

1. That the results of the advisory postal poll, the written responses received during the consultation and the audit report of the governance arrangements of the Parish be noted.
2. That in light of the response to the consultation and findings of the Review as set out at paragraph 5.31 of this report, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be called on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 to determine the abolition of Wexham Court Parish Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019.
3. That, in the event recommendations 1 and 2 above are approved, the Director of Finance and Resources be requested to prepare:
  - a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Wexham Court Parish Council will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition;
  - a draft order for the abolition of the Wexham Court Parish Council and the Civil Parish to take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019, and
  - a timetable of consequential actions.

### **3. The Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

Effective governance arrangements are central to a successful modernised and transformational council and the Community Governance Review process is an important part of those arrangements.-

#### **1. Other Implications**

##### **(a) Financial**

If Council decides to abolish a parish council the Borough Council will have to 'wind up' its the assets and existing liabilities. A further report will be submitted setting out more detailed financial implications that may arise from a decision to abolish at a meeting to approve the abolition order.

## Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Legal challenge to decisions	Seek legal advice at all stages of the Review	The aim of the review is to bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services
Human Rights	None at this stage	
Employment Issues	None at this stage	
Equalities Issues	EIA prepared	
Community Support	Ensure consultation is appropriate and engages all interested parties so that community support for the way forward is effectively sought	Community engagement improved as a result of the recommendations of the review
Communications	Consultation is appropriate and engages all interested parties	Residents given the opportunity to influence how their local area is governed
Community Safety	N/A	N/A

Financial  No financial provision exists for this review and costs to date have been absorbed within existing budget provision. There may be additional costs associated with on-going legal advice and any subsequent challenge to recommendations could involve additional legal costs	Ensure Statutory Guidance on Reviews is followed and recommendations are evidence based.	
Timetable for delivery	The Review must be completed within one year of commencement.	
Project capacity	Head of Democratic Services is the Review Manager currently supporting the Review with Project Officer support. ERS were commissioned to administer the advisory polls.	
Reputation	Ensure Statutory Guidance on Reviews is followed and recommendations are	The outcomes of the review may address longstanding concerns

	evidence based	about governance and probity in the borough
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(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The conduct of a CGR is governed by Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the Act"). Slough Borough Council as a principal council must comply with both Part 4, Chapter 3 (Sections 79 to 102) of the Act and the Terms of Reference adopted by the Council for the purpose of carrying out the review. The council must have regard to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews the relevant sections of which are set out in full at Appendix 1 to this report.

With regard to the dissolution of a Parish Council, the Council needs to be satisfied on the following points in each case:

- a) Whether there is clear evidence of local support for the abolition of the parish and the dissolution of the parish council;
- b) Whether such support has been maintained over a sufficient length of time (i.e. that the case for abolition has not been generated in the short term by an unpopular decision of the council, or a particular year's parish precept etc);
- c) Whether the support is sufficiently informed (i.e. that a properly constituted parish council has had an opportunity to exercise parish functions and that local people therefore have had an opportunity to assess whether the parish council can contribute positively to local quality of life); and
- d) Whether it can be demonstrated that suitable alternative arrangements are in place for engaging the local community.

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed at the start of the Community Governance Review to ensure those with protected characteristics were not disadvantaged during the consultation. Should the recommendations in this report be adopted, a further assessment will be undertaken to inform decision-making on 18<sup>th</sup> December.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 At its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 the Council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review within the Borough area including the parishes and their electoral arrangements. The Council approved terms of reference and timetable for the review and appointed a Review Group comprising Councillors Hussain Swindlehurst, Cheema, Mann, Wright and Strutton to undertake the task and make recommendations to the Council.
- 4.2 The aim of the review is to consider and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services, and to ensure that electors across the whole Borough are treated equitably and fairly.
- 4.3 The review should ensure that electors are consulted, that local arrangements are effective and convenient, and that the interests and identities of the community are reflected in local governance arrangements.
- 4.4 It is focused primarily on the parished areas of the Borough but may also consider other forms of community representation which help make a distinct contribution to the

community such as residents' associations, community forums, neighbourhood working groups etc.

- 4.5 The review may consider the creation, abolition, merging or altering of parish councils and any subsequent electoral arrangements. New parishes may be created to reflect the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, or sense of identity. All parishes must fall within the existing borough boundary.
- 4.6 Details of the current Parish Band D Precept, number of Parish Councillors, electorate sizes and 5 year forecast of the electorate for the three parished areas of the Borough are set out below.

### **Parish population and precepts**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate 2017</b>	<b>Electorate 5 year forecast to 2022</b>	<b>Precept (Band D) £</b>
Britwell	7	1,735	1,740	66.10
Colnbrook with Poyle	12	4,228	4,388	49.40
Wexham Court	11	3,531	3,771	36.72

## **5. Results of Public Consultation**

- 5.1 The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the public consultation was approved by the Council at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 and was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- 5.2 Consultation comprised an updated Council webpage, public notices posted at St Martins Place, libraries and community centres, and letters and emails to local community and leisure organisations, housing associations, business organisations, the police, the health authority and local schools.
- 5.3 Consultation also included an advisory postal poll of voters in all three parish areas on the following questions:  
**Britwell** – Should the parish council be abolished  
**Wexham Court** – Should the parish council be abolished, or if not should it have its boundary and size changed?  
**Colnbrook with Poyle** – Does the parish council provide effective services and engage effectively with local people?
- 5.4 Slough's 3 parish councils were also notified together with the National Association of Local Councils, Berkshire Association of Local Councils, the Slough District Association of Local Councils and the Slough Council for Voluntary Services. All those consulted were invited to submit their views on the Council's proposals by 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.
- 5.5 In response to the above, 27 letters, and emails were received, 4 in relation to Wexham Court, 16 to Britwell and 7 to Colnbrook with Poyle. In addition, a response has been received from Britwell Parish Council.
- 5.6 Copies of all of the written comments received are at appendix 2.

## Review Group Deliberations

5.7 The review group considered each parish council in turn, taking into account its history, concerns noted earlier in the review, the results of the postal poll, and the specific responses received. It also took into account the public funding of the councils and the extent to which each delivered tangible benefits to its residents.

### **Britwell Parish Council**

5.8 The review group noted that in 2013 the Borough Council was sufficiently concerned about the effectiveness of the parish that it consulted parish electors on its abolition. The majority of voters supported abolition, whereupon the Borough Council resolved to test public opinion again in four years' time, and in the meantime reduced its size and number of councillors and simplified its boundaries to enable better performance. The postal poll had a turnout of 27% and the poll result was 566 (57%) in favour of abolition and 424 (43%) against.

5.9 In 2018 the review group was concerned that the parish had not made any significant improvements in the way it worked, other than removing its direct involvement in running the Chicken Ranch bar, or that it has succeeded in bringing the community together despite it being a smaller parish council.

5.10 In response to the recent consultation, 16 comments were received. Of the 9 in favour of abolition, amongst other things responders said that there appeared to be little point in having the parish council and that the precept was not value for money. 7 responses favoured retention of the parish, specifically retaining the grounds for community use. There was also support for the community activities provided on the grounds and the cohesion these promoted and provided.

5.11 A response was also received from the parish council, responding to each of the points in the Borough Council leaflet accompanying the postal ballot papers. The response emphasised the local activities taking place in the community centre and surrounding grounds, its recent focus on strategy and its close working with the Neighbourhood Action Group.

5.12 Noting its work with others to provide services and a lack of clarity about how the Borough taking over parish activities would improve services for residents, the parish argued that its abolition would result in a democratic deficit.

5.13 The advisory postal poll was held between 20<sup>th</sup> October and 9<sup>th</sup> November when the following question was put to voters – ‘Do you support the abolition of Britwell Parish Council?’

Number of eligible voters:	1805
Total number of votes cast:	544
Turnout:	30.14%
Number of votes found to be invalid:	5
Total number of valid votes counted:	539

### **Result**

Number voting	YES .....259. (48.0% of the valid vote)
Number voting	NO .....280 (51.9 % of the valid vote)
	TOTAL 539 (100% of the valid vote)

## Consideration by the Review Group

5.14 The review group considered all the above at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November and made the following observations:

- Some people may have voted in the postal poll as well as submitting an on line comment; it could equally be that a number of the responses were additional votes to the poll and the table in 5.13;
- The poll results indicated support for the retention of the parish, but taken alongside the general comments received, the outcome was balanced with more or less equal support for abolition and retention. Turnout for the Poll at 30.14 % was low and there had only been 16 other submissions on the Council's recommendations indicating an overall general lack of interest in the future of the parish;
- The electorate of the parish had, since 2014, consisted only of those people living in close proximity to the parish council buildings and community grounds and these people were therefore more likely to use the facilities than had been the case when the council was larger. Despite this, the poll results did not demonstrate overwhelming support for the parish council – there was still significant continuing support from the electorate for its abolition;
- Significant support for abolition has been evident since 2013, when the first poll was undertaken;
- A reduction in hiring charges for the hall appeared to be the only benefit that parish residents received for their precept making it questionable value for money for the majority of residents. A resident would have to hire the hall on several occasions per annum to be better off than a non-precept payer;
- One of the respondents indicated particularly that the parish precept of £66 per annum for a Band D property did not represent good value for money. Many residents of the Britwell estate are on low incomes and costs to householders are therefore a particular concern;
- In 2013 the parish council advised the review group that it planned to reduce the precept, but this has not happened;
- No evidence was provided that the parish council was likely to make and sustain any significant improvements in the way it works or succeed in bringing the community together. The majority of the activity and events detailed in the parish council's submission as reasons for its continued existence were provided by community groups themselves or the Borough Council;
- The parish council had used information fliers in the past to communicate with residents, but now mainly relied on word of mouth, question time at (poorly attended) council meetings and the website. However the website was out of date and the council had no immediate plans to update it;
- The parish council had ceased its direct involvement in running the Chicken Ranch bar, but no other improvements in the way it worked;
- There was no evidence that the reduction in size of the parish council had resulted in

it operating in a more strategic, effective or focused way or delivering improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient local services. It was noted that a serious fraud had consumed much of the council's attention immediately after the last elections, but there was no evidence that during the significant period of time which has elapsed since then any improvement has been made;

- The fraud by parish staff resulted in a loss of public money;
- Should the parish council be abolished, its property, rights and liabilities transfer to, and vest in, the borough council. In this event the borough council could provide support to former parish council staff to secure other employment or redeployment opportunities;
- Concerns had been expressed about development of parish land in the event that the parish was abolished. All of the parish council land is currently designated as public open space and as such is protected from development by Core Policy 2 (Green Belt and Open Spaces) which states: 'existing private and public open spaces will be preserved and enhanced. Where, exceptionally, it is agreed that an open space may be lost a new one, or suitable compensatory provision will be required to be provided elsewhere';
- In the event of abolition, the borough council has no plans to change the status of the community centre and the borough council would work with the Neighbourhood Forum and other relevant groups to that end. The existing parish council building could continue to be used, linked with its outdoor recreation space, as a centre for local young people and sport. The nearby Britwell Hub on Wentworth Avenue provides a further local venue for recreational and social activities as well as learning and the local library. A Northern Neighbourhood Forum has been established as part of the joint partnership between Osborne and the borough council and it is intended the forum will be developed to have a wider remit focused on improving the area to meet local people's needs and engage with wider borough council services;
- In the event of abolition it was noted that the borough council currently offers concessionary rates to voluntary and charitable organisations at all its community centres and these charges are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they adequately support local groups. The borough council's 'Five Year Plan' makes it clear that it will work to build on the strengths of communities, including supporting local community groups and seeks a flexible approach to achieve the widest benefit to the local community. Between the Britwell Hub, the facilities on the parish site and elsewhere in Britwell, the capacity exists to accommodate all the various groups currently using the community building;

Having carefully considered all the above, the review group made the following recommendations:

1. That the results of the advisory postal poll, the representations made by Britwell Parish Council and the written responses received during the consultation be noted.
2. That in light of the response to the consultation and findings of the Review as set out at paragraph 5.14 of this report, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be called on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 to determine the abolition of Britwell Parish Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019.
3. That, in the event recommendations 1 and 2 above are approved, the Director of



Finance and Resources be requested to prepare:

- a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Britwell Parish Council will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition;
- a draft order for the abolition of the Britwell Parish Council and the Civil Parish to take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019, and
- a timetable of consequential actions

### **Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council**

- 5.15 As part of the 2013 Community Governance Review the Council had concerns about Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council's engagement with local people and the borough council reserved the right to test public opinion in an advisory postal poll at or after the next parish council elections in 2015 if it was not satisfied that the Parish Council was engaging more widely with local people.
- 5.16 At its meeting in September the Council acknowledged that submissions received at Stage one of the 2018 Review contained conflicting views about the value of the services the parish provides and whether it benefits, or was representative of, Colnbrook.
- 5.17 The borough council did not consider it had been provided with substantial evidence that the parish council was engaging more widely with local people and had received views where the value of the parish council was queried. As the views of local people had not been formally sought since the parish council's establishment in 1995, the borough council agreed that public opinion on its effectiveness should be tested.
- 5.18 The borough council therefore agreed that electors and other interested parties be formally consulted on whether the parish council is providing effective services and engaging effectively with local people, this consultation included an advisory postal poll of electors in the parish.
- 5.19 Seven written comments have been received in response to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage consultation. Six of the views expressed are in support of the parish council whilst acknowledging that there was room for improvement. It should be noted that three of the submissions are from the same individual, two of which are supportive and one indicating a view that the poll question was unclear and could be classed as two separate questions. One comment indicated that they were unaware of what the Parish council did and would be happy to see it go.
- 5.20 The advisory postal Poll was held between 20<sup>th</sup> October and 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2018. The following question was put to voters: - Do you consider that Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council is providing effective services and engages effectively with local people?

Number of eligible voters:	4313
Total number of votes cast:	1197
Turnout:%	27.75
Number of votes found to be invalid:	4
Total number of valid votes counted:	1193

## Result

Number voting YES .....	640 (53.6% of the valid vote)
Number voting NO .....	553 (46.4% of the valid vote)
	TOTAL 1193 (100% of the valid vote)

The result was further broken down by Polling District as follows:

Polling District CPA (Westfield)	YES	229	NO	227
Polling District CPB (Village)	YES	192	NO	150
Polling District CPC (Pippins)	YES	211	NO	162

- 5.21 The consultation responses in support of the Parish Council recognise that there was room for improvement and that according to some views, if it was to be truly representative, the Parish Council needed to be more open and inclusive. It needed to reach out more and be more receptive to new ideas and more responsive to local views.
- 5.22 Evidence submitted from local businesses, voluntary groups etc demonstrated that the Parish Council had the support of, and was valued by, local businesses, the police and community groups.
- 5.23 The Working Group noted that the outcome of the Poll broken down into Polling Districts had demonstrated that the Parish Council needed to engage more with people in Westfield. The Parish council had maintained a narrow level of support. There had been no Brands Hill previous poll to enable a comparison of sustained or reducing levels of support.
- 5.24 The Working Group considered that the Parish Council had demonstrated that it had a clear aim of making Colnbrook with Poyle a better place to live and the Council had a clear role in representing residents views and resolving concerns specifically given public consultation relating to the new runway at Heathrow and the Western Rail Link.
- 5.25 The consultation responses coupled with the outcome of the Poll led the Working Group to recommend to Council that Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be advised of the need to consider and address the feedback from the Review about the Parish's effectiveness and engagement with local people and that the Council would reserve the right to test public opinion in the future if it was not satisfied that the Parish Council was providing effective services and engaging more effectively with local people.

### **Review Group Recommendation:**

- 1 That the written responses received in relation to Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be noted.
- 2 That the results of the advisory postal poll on whether the parish council is effective and engages effectively with local people be noted.
- 3 That the parish council be urged to give consideration to the views expressed via the poll and improve its engagement with local people with an emphasis on the Westfield/Brands Hill area (PD CPA), where the poll demonstrated lower levels of public support.

- 4 That the borough council will review the parish’s performance again toward the end of its next term of office and reserves the right to test public opinion in a further advisory postal poll if it is not satisfied that it is engaging widely with local people.

**Wexham Court Parish Council**

- 5.26 The review group noted that in 2013 the borough council was sufficiently concerned about the effectiveness of the parish that it consulted parish electors on its abolition. The postal poll had a turnout of 26.5% and the poll result was 426 (45%) in favour of abolition and 522 (55%) against. The majority of voters supported its retention but the borough council reserved the right to test public opinion again in the future if concerns continued about governance. The parish council was specifically urged to address the identified governance issues and seek professional advice on employment matters.
- 5.27 In 2018 the review group identified continuing concerns about the parish’s governance and agreed to consult again with local electors and other interested parties on possible abolition as well as changes to the parish council boundary, number of councillors and name of the parish if there was support for its retention.
- 5.28 In response to this consultation 4 written comments were received, 2 of which express support for the parish, 1 saying the parish councillors understood the needs of the local area, 1 seeks the removal of Norway Drive from Slough and its relocation in a separate town of Wexham, and 1 expressing sadness should the parish council go. There was a suggestion that some improvements are necessary, eg parish councillors should be from the area and that greater support was needed from the borough.
- 5.29 The review group was advised in September that, as part of a rolling series of audits of the parish councils in Slough, an audit of the parish’s governance arrangements had been undertaken. The review group noted that the report was in draft, but it identified that the control framework required significant improvement. In November the review group considered the finalized report, which is attached at appendix three to this report.
- 5.30 The advisory postal poll was held between 20<sup>th</sup> October and 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2018. Two questions were put to voters:

Q1 Do you support the abolition of Wexham Court Parish Council?

Number of eligible voters:	3686
Total number of votes cast:	952
Turnout:%	25.83
Number of votes found to be invalid:	26
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	926

Result:

Number voting YES ..... 404 (43.6% of the valid vote) Number voting  
 Number voting NO . 522 (56.4 % of the valid vote)  
 TOTAL 926 (100% of the valid vote)

If you answered NO to Q1 above

Q2 Do you support changing the Council boundary, reducing the number of Councillors and changing the name?

Total number of votes cast:	522
Number of votes found to be invalid:	25
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	497

Result:

Number voting YES ..... 100.(20 % of the valid vote) Number voting  
Number voting NO 397 (80 % of the valid vote)  
TOTAL 497 (100% of the valid vote)

**Consideration by the Review Group**

5.31 The review group considered all the above at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November and made the following observations:

- the audit of the governance arrangements was intended to ensure that the money received via the precept was being spent in line with delegated authority and to give an assurance that the precept collected for the parish was being used as intended;
- the Auditor's conclusion was that the control framework in place at the parish requires significant improvement and issues have been identified where immediate management action was necessary. Particular concerns were highlighted over the pre-signing of cheques, uploading of confidential meeting minutes to the internet, the need for a clear audit trail to identify decisions being made by the parish council, lack of policies and procedures to support investment decisions and the use of purchase orders; the parish council had been urged in 2013 to address the identified governance issues but significant control weaknesses remain;
- the parish council had also been urged in 2013 to seek professional advice on employment matters. Whilst it had sought advice from an HR consultant from the Berkshire Association of Local Councils and was waiting for a review of job roles and structure to be completed, no formal contracts or job roles for staff were in place and the Auditor been unable to confirm that employees were being paid the correct remuneration or sufficient overtime rates, which puts the council at significant risk;
- the Working Group felt strongly that based on the Audit report that the Parish Council's governance arrangements were not sound and that it had failed to address these failings over a number of years. The Parish Council had not been able to demonstrate efficient and robust use of public funds.
- the poll results indicated support for the retention of the parish council, but the turnout was low at 25% and there had only been four other responses to the consultation indicating an overall general lack of interest in it. Of the 25% of people who did vote over 400 supported its abolition;
- there was little support for changes to the parish boundary, size or name;
- concerns had been identified about relationships between parish councillors and staff, the appointment and management of staff, financial management, procurement arrangements and lettings policies. All these suggested poor governance and inefficiency;

- in the event of abolition the parish facilities could be run equally well by the borough council. The parish hall could be developed to provide a community hub, opening up to the wider local community and encouraging its use for community functions;
- Should the parish council be abolished, its property, rights and liabilities transfer to, and vest in, the borough council. In this event the borough council could provide support to former parish council staff to secure other employment or redeployment opportunities.

Having carefully considered all the above, the review group made the following recommendations:

- 1 That the results of the advisory postal poll and the written responses received during the consultation be noted.

That in light of the response to the consultation and findings of the Review as set out at paragraph 5.31 of this report, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be called on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 to determine the abolition of Wexham Court Parish Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019.

That, in the event recommendations 1 and 2 above are approved, the Director of Finance and Resources be requested to prepare:

- a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Wexham Court Parish Council will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition;
- a draft order for the abolition of the Wexham Court Parish Council and the Civil Parish to take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019, and
- a timetable of consequential actions.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 The review group was concerned to ensure that local government in Slough embodies the highest standards of governance and probity. It was very concerned by the shortcomings identified above, which it felt reflected badly on the whole sector.
- 6.2 Prior to formal orders being made, the group has asked that the Director of Finance & Resources bring to Council a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Britwell & Wexham Parish Councils will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition.
- 6.3 This will enable members to judge the review group's recommendations against its aim of bringing about improved community engagement, better local democracy, more effective and convenient local services and equitable treatment of electors across the whole Borough.
- 6.4 Parish councils can play an important role in terms of community empowerment but need both robust governance and to be able to demonstrate value for money to their residents.
- 6.5 Whilst Government's guidance states that it 'expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition of parishes' and that 'the abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified' the review group considers that the

recommendations to abolish Britwell and Wexham Court Parish Councils are clearly justified for the reasons set out in the body of this report.

- 6.6 The review group has given careful consideration to the responses to the consultation undertaken as part of the Review and the recommendations it has made in respect of the existing three parish councils are based on the evidence received.

## **7 Next Steps**

- 7.1 If the Council is minded to agree the recommendations of the review group as set out at paragraph 2 of this report, work will commence on drawing up an Order to give effect to the decisions for report to an extraordinary Council meeting in December 2018.
- 7.2 In addition officers will prepare a report to include how the facilities and services provided or supported by Britwell & Wexham Parish Councils will be supported and developed in the event of their abolition.
- 7.3 It is envisaged that a full list of property, rights and liabilities of the Parish Council will be reported to the Council along with a timetable / timeline of actions/considerations.

## **8 Background Papers**

Written submissions received in response to the public consultation.

Electoral Reform Services reports dated 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 on the results of the advisory polls in Britwell, Colnbrook with Poyle and Wexham Court parish areas.

## **Guidance on Community Governance Reviews – Extract**

Section 100 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides for guidance to be issued regarding community governance reviews and for local authorities to have regard to that guidance. The key paragraphs relating to abolition of parishes and the dissolution of parish councils, are set out in full as follows:

- 117.** While the Government expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition, of parishes, there are circumstances where the principal council may conclude that the provision of effective and convenient local government and/or the reflection of community identity and interests may be best met, for example, by the abolition of a number of small parishes and the creation of a larger parish covering the same area. If, following a review, a principal council believes that this would provide the most appropriate community governance arrangements, then it will wish to make this recommendation; the same procedures apply to any recommendation to abolish a parish and/or parish council as to other recommendations (see paragraph 90 -97). Regulations provide for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities of a parish council to the new successor parish council, or where none is proposed to the principal council itself.
- 118.** Section 88 of the 2007 Act provides for a community governance review to recommend the alteration of the area of, or the abolition of, an existing parish as a result of a review. The area of abolished parishes does not have to be redistributed to other parishes, an area can become unparished. However, it is the Government's view that it would be undesirable to see existing parishes abolished with the area becoming unparished with no community governance arrangements in place.
- 119.** The abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified. Any decision a principal council may make on whether to abolish a parish should not be taken lightly. Under the previous parish review legislation, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Secretary of State considered very carefully recommendations made by principal councils for the abolition of any parish (without replacement) given that to abolish parish areas removes a tier of local government. Between 1997 and 2008, the Government rarely received proposals to abolish parish councils, it received only four cases seeking abolition and of these only one was approved for abolition by the Secretary of State.
- 120.** Exceptionally, there may be circumstances where abolition may be the most appropriate way forward. Under the 2007 Act provisions, the principal council would need to consider local opinion, including that of parish councillors and local electors. It would need to find evidence that the abolition of a parish council was justified, and that there was clear and sustained local support for such action. A factor taken into account by the Government in deciding abolition cases, was that local support for abolition needed to have been demonstrated over at least a period equivalent to two terms of office of the parish councillors (i.e. 8 years), and that such support was sufficiently informed. This means a properly constituted parish council should have had

an opportunity to exercise its functions so that local people can judge its ability to contribute to local quality of life.

- 121.** Where a community governance review is considering abolishing a parish council we would expect the review to consider what arrangements will be in place to engage with the communities in those areas once the parish is abolished. These arrangements might be an alternative forum run by or for the local community, or perhaps a residents' association. It is doubtful however, that abolition of a parish and its council could ever be justified as the most appropriate action in response to a particular contentious issue in the area or decision of the parish council.
- 122.** In future, principal councils will wish to consider the sort of principles identified above in arriving at their decisions on whether or not to abolish a parish council. In doing so, they will be aware that decisions about community governance arrangements, including decisions for the abolition of a parish council, may attract a challenge by way of judicial review.



Ref	Name/source	Date of letter/e mail	Subject
1	Member of the Public	21/10/18	Britwell
2	Member of the Public	21/10/18	Britwell
3	Member of the Public	21/10/18	Britwell
4	Member of the Public	21/10/18	Britwell
5	Member of the Public	24/10/18	Britwell
6	Member of the Public	23/10/18	Britwell
7	Member of the Public	26/10/18	Britwell
8	Member of the Public	28/10/18	Britwell
9	Member of the Public	29/10/18	Britwell
10	Minister of Britwell Baptist Church	29/10/18	Britwell
11	Member of the Public	30/10/18	Britwell

12	Member of the Public	31/10/18	Britwell
13	Member of the Public	31/10/18	Britwell
14	Member of the Public	31/10/18	Britwell
15	Britwell Parish Council	/10/18	Britwell
16	Member of the Public	08/11/2018	Britwell
17	Member of the public	09/11/2018	Britwell
18	Member of the Public	25/10/18	Colnbrook with Poyle
19	Member of the Public	06/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
20	Colnbrook Village Resident and Secretary of the Colnbrook Residents Association	06/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
21	Member of the Public	06/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
22	Member of the Public	09/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
23	Trustee Colnbrook Community Partnership	09/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
24	Thames Valley Police	09/11/2018	Colnbrook with Poyle
25	Member of the Public	9/10/18	Wexham Court
26	Member of the Public	20/10/18	Wexham Court
27	Mr Brian Edwards Hon. Treasurer Parish Church of St Mary Wexham	25/10/18	Wexham Court
28	Member of the Public	30/10/18	Wexham Court

1. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

I hereby vote YES to abolish the Britwell Parish Council.

2. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

I hereby vote Yes to abolishing the Britwell Parish Council

3. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

I hereby vote YES to abolish the Britwell Parsish Council.

4. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

I hereby vote YES to abolish the Britwell Parish Council.

5. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

My mum and I have discussed the abolition of the council and believe it should be abolished.

6. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

In a nutshell I think the Britwell Parish Council needs to be abolished. I purchased a new build house on Kennedy Park 4yrs or so ago and felt we had a fantastic spot albeit with the community centre opposite on Long Furlong Drive. Within 6 months, the Chicken Ranch opened and thus our home ownership has become a nightmare. Drug dealing, Anti Social Behaviour, daily Drink Driving from the venue all of which has been reported to numerous bodies over the years. When it first opened I contacted Britwell Parish Council asking why the Chicken Ranch failed to appear on our property search paperwork prior to buying and that we should have all been told yet I was totally ignored. I contacted them a few times about the same issue and the fact that they had ignored me and still got no response leading me to believe they were closing ranks and effectively being corrupt as I then had the belief that they opened the chicken ranch with back handers. When we complained about noise issues every single weekend they got a Security Guard to work there to take noise readings... To highlight how dodgy this was, whenever he went to take a reading, the music would be turned down and the door shut to lower the reading. Additionally that security guard was there drinking anyway so he effectively wore a badge to tick a box for the parish council to hush the residents around the chicken ranch. The chicken ranch needs to be closed. The drug dealing from there is absolutely rife (again, it has been reported in numerous different ways).

We have also complained about the sheer amount of drug dealing in the area, and anti social behaviour in Kennedy Park, and Kennedy Parade shops. Nothing gets done about that either. We have pleaded for the benches in Kennedy Park to be removed as they were the worst thing they could have put in there yet they still exist. We asked for more litter bins to make it 'easier' for the dog walkers who fail to pick up their dog mess, or the feral teenagers getting served booze from the off license on the Parade smashing the bottles all over the field making it hazardous for dogs yet were turned down. We have additionally reported these to SBC and at least had a response yet Britwell Parish Council just ignore us (I know my neighbours have complained to them too about issues). Frankly we pay the Britwell Precept for absolutely nothing. They are not transparent. They do not respond to genuine concerns from their residents/electorate and just ignore them as if they are a problem themselves or might make them face the issues they created in the first place. They do nothing good for the area, and those voting to keep it are only clinging on to the past. Continue building in Britwell, demolish the Chicken Ranch and build there if you must. Britwell Parish Council needs to be abolished.

**7. Member of the Public - Britwell**

The parish council have always supported local people within our community and small preschool's like ours, without their support we not be able to provide the dedicated service we offer our families within our Britwell community. The parish council grounds provide football for all ages of children, they put on free events for the children at Christmas for families who would not usually be able to attend a pantomime financially. They represent our parish at council meetings and let ordinary peoples voices be heard over crime, policing and housing issues on our estate. These are just a few of the many items covered at the parish meetings. Please do not close our parish council down, how will our voices be heard or represented otherwise.

**8. Member of the Public - Britwell**

I am in favour of the the Britwell Parish to remain for the reasons, 1. It provides a platform for the community to come to together during the carnival period which will disconnect us from one another if taking away. 2. Our young Lad's enjoy the use of the ground for their football games. 3. Over crowding the communtiy with more properties will in the long run creat opportunities for crimes evolving among the youths that will go out of control in years to come.

**9. Member of the Public - Britwell**

It should be abolished.

10. **Minister of Britwell Baptist Church - Britwell**

I am the minister of Britwell Baptist Church and wish to submit that the Parish grounds should be maintained for the use of people living on the estate. This is the place where we hold most of our community events on a regular basis. As churches together we support the work Britwell Parish does for the community here is Britwell. I am in favour of the parish ground NOT to be taken over by the council. Britwell community needs these grounds to help integration of people in this community.

11. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

The park is significant for so many way, brings together evryone within the family during carnival

12. **Member of the Public - Britwell**

Please use my vote to SAVE (KEEP IT) our local BRITWELL PARISH COUNCIL.

13 . **Member of the Public - Britwell**

1. The whole residents will lose out community facilities.
2. Local democratic representation will be lost.
- 3.The community enjoys cohesion among each other and much more.

14 . **Member of the Public - Britwell**

1. The community will be better served by having local democracy and local community centre.
2. The oneness and cohesion existence requires the parish to continue.
3. Without the centre the community will facilities and much more.

15 **Britwell Parish Council -Attached at annex**

16. **Member of the public – Britwell**

I would like to raise my concern about Chicken Ranch Pub. The problem with ongoing noise and parties was reported by us many times with no result. the place attracts drug dealers and suspicious people later at night.

17. **Member of the Public – Britwell**

I was unsure about the choice on abolishing the Parish Council until I looked at their official website. The last 'news' item was from November 2017, if the Parish Council has no news to share in the last year, what is the point in them even being here? Disband the Parish Council.

18. **Member of the Public – Colnbrook with Poyle**

Question Q1 of your Ballot appears to be loaded against the Parish Council. In fact it contains two separate questions. One is about the provision of effective services and the other about engagement. If one considers that the Parish Council are providing very effective services but that there is certainly some room for improvement in engagement with local people that don't take an interest in local affairs and are somewhat apathetic towards community life then the ballot is worthless and could be dangerously misleading. In this instance should one vote yes or no. Most people will wrongly decide that they need to say "No". The Ballot form instructions seeking that it is completed and returned immediately gives no time for the voters' proper reflection or research. Some people who don't really care will not know or be that interested in what services the Parish Council as opposed the District Council provide. You will therefore receive uninformed and unconsidered votes.

19. **Member of the Public – Colnbrook with Poyle**

Very much support the existence of our Parish Council. However I accept that there is room for improvement. Slough Borough Council should strongly and without political pressure consider revising the qualifications required in terms of candidates standing for election (if this is within their gift).

Candidates should be permanent residents in the Parish at the time of election. Further to this the Parish should be warded into three areas divided along the lines of the pre 1995 county borders. Each ward should have four representatives (ideally each living in that ward). Political parties have increased their efforts to take control of our parish and currently we have four Cllrs that do not live in the Parish. Three of these are sponsored and supported by political parties. The other has significant business interests in the area. I believe that such people, bringing with them their own agendas dilute the representation of the local resident population. Colnbrook is significantly different from the rest of Slough. Visitors often comment on this, as did last year's Mayor when she met some of the community at just two of our very many successful community social events. It is the people that actually live in Colnbrook and go about their lives here that suffer the highs and lows of having good community spirit whilst living right next door to one of the busiest airports in the world. We are also the location for a huge incinerator that handles all the waste from Slough and a much wider area. In the last decade Slough's planning policies have brought Heathrow Airport even further into our front rooms with the Poyle Industrial Estate changing from light engineering, laboratories and offices into an extension of Heathrow's Freight Handling Facility. Lorries are now destroying our street furniture and pumping pollution into one of our local schools. Despite lobbying by residents and the Parish no mitigations have been carried out. Also and alarmingly without any consultation or proper engagement with Colnbrook residents SBC decided to support Heathrow expansion with a third runway to be built in our parish. Shame on you SBC. Our resident Parish councillors either meet the community at the school gates, in local streets, at community gatherings and events. Most are members of local clubs, associations, societies, churches. Amongst them we have school governors, Neighbourhood action group members, Flood Action Group members, Village Hall trustees, Wives Group members, Whist Club supporters, Heathrow Local Focus Forum members, Colnbrook Community Association members, active Colnbrook Residents' Association members. They have always been and remain a real physical part of our community before and without the direct aid of the internet. It is appreciated that there now is another world out there were people living in other countries can post their views on what's happening in Colnbrook and probably this is somewhere that the Parish Council should look to raise their profile and improve the content on the website. However, the Parish Council continue to host public sessions at their monthly meetings. They also hold monthly surgeries or drop in sessions for people to raise issues. They publish newsletters and they do their best to provide useful information on notice boards. They are available, approachable people and very willing to be part of two way engagement with the community. The Parish Council's community engagement compares very favourably with that of the District Council which have no Public meetings in Colnbrook, Borough Councillors hold no surgeries and to the best of my knowledge Colnbrook no longer receives the Citizen newsletter. Also, SBC's recreation ground lost its Green Flag Status last year. This can be compared with the Parish Council's longer and continuous success. I understand that of late that the District council has reduced the frequency of meetings with the Parish Council and suggested a more cumbersome method of communication with responsible officers. SBC should use the intelligence of the Parish Council to directly assist departments where there are issues that need attention. With an inadequate highways monitoring team SBC should welcome the Parish Council's involvement. I trust that whilst being critical you find my comments constructive.

**20. Brenda Pettit, Colnbrook Village Resident and Secretary of the Colnbrook Residents Association – Colnbrook with Poyle**

I am writing as a Colnbrook Village Resident and also as Secretary of the Colnbrook Residents Association. I strongly support the retention of Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council. This Council having been requested by the residents in 1995 is to the best of my knowledge and belief still very much needed, supported, wanted and required by the overall majority of residents in Colnbrook. I have always found the Parish Council to be wholly supportive of all the activities promoted by the Colnbrook Residents Association as well as the Community as a whole. It is at the door step of the residents when most needed and so valuable in enhancing good Community Relations and harmony. It would be so very sad to lose this service which the Colnbrook Residents Association feel is such an integral and important part of our village. I speak for all our members in confirming how important the Parish Council is to our community. It must not be lost under any circumstances.

**21. Member of the Public – Colnbrook with Poyle**

Slough borough Council should be more engaging with the Parish. It seems we are too remote and the wrong side of the M4 to be of much interest other than the site for an incinerator, a proliferation of freight forwarding depots and now a new airport runway. The people of Colnbrook with Poyle want you to value them not just the land assets. SBC needs to review its own governance as well. We have two district councillors in Colnbrook only one has any significant contact with a wide range of residents, attends social and community events as an equal, is a governor at one of our schools and a member of Colnbrook societies and associations. The other is distinctly different and somewhat anonymous to parish residents although now a civic personality who apparently does much good work in other parts of Slough.. This person and a close relative backed by a political party both stood at the last Parish Election and won sufficient votes to take up office but failed to accept it in the prescribed manner. This put residents to a cost of circa £7000 for a by-election.. However this person sought to blame others. It concerns me to hear that this person is a member of the Governance review team. If this is true I trust any prejudicial views will be guarded against by the rest of the committee.

**22. Member of the Public – Colnbrook with Poyle**

I have lived in Colnbrook for 11 years and do not know what the parish really do. I found out a few years ago that they arrange a Christmas dinner but not sure how you find out where or when it is. Would be happy not to have them.



**23. Mr M Nye, Trustee – Colnbrook Community Partnership – attached at annex**

**24. Thames Valley Police – Colnbrook with Poyle**

I am the neighbourhood Sgt that covers Colnbrook. I have been a neighbourhood Officer for over 10 years. I have recently moved to the East Slough neighbourhood team which covers Colnbrook. Since starting on the team I have been impressed with Colnbrook Parish Councils passion for trying to improve the parish. When I have attended the meetings there have been residents present which is always good to see, giving their view points and asking questions. The Parish Council have assisted me in trying and resolve some of the issues that are of concern to the community. I hope we will be able to continue working together in the future.

**25. Member of Public – Wexham Court**

I believe the Parish Council should continue operation, however changes are required. Councillors should be from the parish they are representing to ensure a vested interest in the work that they are doing. There is need for a greater awareness within the Parish to the work that the PC do within the community, as well as the councillors being more present in the local area at regular intervals to understand the needs of the constituents. Measures should be put in place to review the attendance of councillors to PC meetings, notably a minimum percentage of meeting attendance should be set as current levels for some councillors is unsatisfactory. Greater support is needed from the borough council to ensure the PC runs correctly and is offered training where necessary.

**26. Member of Public – Wexham Court**

It is immensely sad to lose this parish after many generations due to the very recent infiltration of a group of racist Labour councillors who have no interest in the parish, only their personal gain. I only hope this level of corruption is not at borough level, but I have little hope of that, and I hope the recent investigations revealed in the newspapers are continued at all levels of our supposed elected officials

**27. Mr Brian Edwards Hon. Treasurer Parish Church of St Mary Wexham**

In response to your communication dated 1<sup>st</sup> October which was received a few days ago, we at St Mary's Church Wexham Reject the closing down of the Wexham Court Parish Council on the grounds that the representatives on that Council understand the needs of the local area.

The recommended changes to the boundary of the Wexham Court Estate is absurd. The estate was built as it should be recognised as a well knit community from all religions and walks of life and it has been for some fifty years.

We point out that the website stated in the fourth paragraph is conveniently not recognised and cannot be visited. You should make sure it works before you publicise to the 'outside world'.

Wexham Court Parish Council should remain as it is currently formed.

On behalf of the Parochial Church Council.

#### **28. Member of the Public – Wexham Court**

Would like to see Norway Drive removed from Slough and be in separate town of Wexham. The area is big enough. Otherwise if you are twisting my arm, create parish of ward of Wexham Court ( not Wexham lea) to include Wexham Green and remove Upton Lea.



Parish Community Centre  
Long Furlong Drive  
BRITWELL  
Slough, Berks  
SL2 2PH.

T: 01753 570109  
E: [britwellparish@btconnect.com](mailto:britwellparish@btconnect.com)

Catherine Meek  
Head of Democratic Services  
Slough Borough Council

by email  
22 October 2018

Dear Ms Meek

**Re: Community Governance Review 2018**

Britwell Parish Council notes the recommendations made by the Slough Borough Council Review team in favour of the abolition of Britwell Parish Council .

Further to your request for a further submission, Britwell PC notes the arguments you have put forward to residents in the leaflet which you are issuing and responds as follows: \_

## What Slough Borough Council Says

*The borough council had hoped a reduction in size would enable the parish council to operate in a more strategic and focused way and bring about improved community engagement and more effective and convenient delivery of local services.*

## Britwell Parish Council Says

- As a result of the 2013 Review, the Borough Council reduced the size and scope of Britwell Parish Council. The local services it can provide relate to the Community Centre and the surrounding grounds.
- Since Summer 2017, Strategy has been an ongoing Agenda item at the monthly Full Council meetings.
- Focus on Strategy led the Parish Council to work closely with the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) and Borough Council Events to run the Summer Celebration in June 2018.
- The Council is committed to ongoing partnership with NAG and Borough Council Events on future events, and is open to other partnerships which would benefit the local community.

## **What Slough Borough Council Says**

*The borough council .. is not convinced the parish council has made any significant improvements in the way it works, other than removing its direct involvement in running the Chicken Ranch bar,*

## **Britwell Parish Council Says**

There has been a major change in the way in which the Council works, moving from direct control to working increasingly in co-operation with others, including:-

- Working with Berkshire Active and also participating in “Active Slough”, organised by the Borough Council in 2018, by allowing the Community Centre and grounds to be used for:-
  - Wildcat Girls Football for 5-7 year olds and for 8-11 year olds;
  - Teen Boxing
  - Pilates
  - Rugby for children and young people.
- Working party meetings with the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) and Borough Council Events to plan the Summer Celebration in June 2018;
- Bringing in Tenants to run and take the commercial risk on the Bar, and in the process free the Parish Council from all the workload involved in running a Bar.

## **What Slough Borough Council Says**

*The borough council .. is not convinced the parish council ... has succeeded in bringing the community together despite it being a smaller parish council*

## **Britwell Parish Council Says**

- The only Bar now open in Britwell is the Chicken Ranch – the Borough Council would plan to close it;
- After a gap of two years, in June 2018, the community came together again at the Summer Celebration, a bigger and more inclusive event than previously held.
- Questionnaires were produced to seek Residents’ views on the Summer Celebration - 66 completed questionnaires were returned ,with 100% stating their support for the Summer Celebration as a good use of Council resources.
- The Hall is used by a variety of groups including Over 50’s Arts & Crafts; Britwell Come Dancing; Britwell Drama Group at reduced or subsidised rates as well as commercial users which benefits residents , such as Slimming World .
- New initiatives which are seen as benefitting and bringing together the community are considered and approved by the Parish Council at reduced or subsidised rates eg The Job Club.

## What Slough Borough Council Says

*The borough council also has concerns about the parish council's ability to operate effectively and transparently and, whilst some of its services are valued by local people, the borough council believes these and other services could be provided more efficiently and effectively for local residents by other means.*

## Britwell Parish Council Says

- The Parish Council meets monthly (other than August & December) and its meetings at the Community Centre are open . Does the Borough Council really believe that there will be more transparency for residents if Britwell issues are considered, amongst many other issues, in Slough by the Borough Council ?
- Neighbourhood police attend Parish Council meetings – where they are able to hear and be asked to respond to local issues.
- The Parish Council is able to offer residents and local groups a reduced or subsidised rate to hire the Hall – would the Borough Council continue to do so? The charges at the Britwell Centre (run by Slough Borough Council) are substantially higher than those charged to use the Parish Community Centre.
- Parish Council members live in the community – they hear of issues affecting local people and then bring to attention of those responsible – be it anti social behaviour (Monksfield Way & Twist Way), drug dealing (Monksfield Way & Upper Lees), dog fouling (Goodwin Road), or cars illegally parked (Long Readings Lane).
- The Borough Council gives no indications as to what costs savings if any it believes direct control would provide .

## What Slough Borough Council Says

*The review group has considered what arrangements might be put in place to engage with communities in the area if the parish were to be abolished. The existing parish council building could continue to be used, linked with its outdoor recreation space, as a centre for local young people and sport. Members noted the Britwell Hub provides a venue for recreational and social activities as well as learning and the local library. Parties and events could be supported by a temporary bar.*

## Britwell Parish Council Says

- The Parish Council consists of local people, who are able to hear and express Residents' concerns – be it to Neighbourhood Police who attend Council meetings or on local planning applications . That local democratic voice will disappear with the Borough Council's proposals;
- The Parish Council – being accountable to local Britwell people - is better placed to decide how best to use the Community Centre and grounds – hire out the car park

to a car wash business (No) or allow hire of Hall for Diabetic Screening at reduced rate (Yes) ;

- Having Tenants to run the only remaining Bar in Britwell – the Borough Council only plans to have a temporary bar for parties and events.
- It is not clear that the Britwell Hub could accommodate the non Youth groups which currently use the Parish Community Centre and if it did, it can only be assumed that they would be charged the rates publicised for the Britwell Hub – which for some might mean closing down their group.

In sum, the Borough Council's Review Team, as expressed in their leaflet to Britwell residents, is proposing a democratic deficit, in removing the presence of the Parish Council, but providing no real substance as to how and to what extent its direct administration would result in a material improvement for residents.

In view of the public interest, this letter will be copied to the media.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Holder  
Locum Clerk

**The Community Governance Review Officer  
Democratic Services  
Slough Borough Council  
St Martins Place  
51 Bath Road  
Slough, Berkshire  
SL1 3UF**

**For the attention of:- Fiona Ahern**

8<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
Ref: CCP/2018/03

**Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council**

Dear Madam,

On behalf of the Colnbrook Community Partnership (CCP) I submit a firm positive response in favour of the retention of the Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council. The Parish Council offers a great deal of support to other Colnbrook community groups, acting in the capacity of an 'umbrella organisation' without their specific support, the future of our community groups would certainly be compromised.

The Parish Council are the first tier of local government, being made up from individuals who live or work within the Parish Boundary, and as such are both the closest and have the greater knowledge of the community and the problems that beset this community.

A strong community bond has evolved between most of the Colnbrook groups who work with the Parish Council in order to organise and structure community events throughout the year. The Parish Council are represented as a Partner with the Colnbrook Community Partnership, as is SBC, within the charity. The Parish Council have representation on the Colnbrook Residents' Association, Colnbrook Village Hall Trust, Colnbrook NAG and Colnbrook FAG. Their involvement in other issues including HGV traffic through our residential areas, Fly-tipping, highway and neglected footpath complaints are well documented and are issues to which the Parish Council have no direct responsibility for but nevertheless advocate strongly to find solutions to these problems.

If the Parish Council were to be disbanded, then I fear much of our community spirit and cohesion would be lost. It must be remembered that it was the Colnbrook Residents' Association who in 1947 brought together the three separate districts of

Colnbrook, Poyle and Brands Hill. From this in 1994 when Colnbrook with Poyle ward was the outcome of the Boundaries Commission decision to move our community into Slough Borough Council that the CRA successfully petitioned for a Parish Council. That situation has worked well for the community and it still has the potential to work. There may be some valid criticisms of the Parish Council no organisation can ever please everyone all of the time, but without that “buffer” between Community and Local authority is a situation that ultimately would not be of benefit to anyone.

I therefore strongly advocate that the future of the Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be assured.

Yours sincerely,

Michael J. Nye  
Trustee  
Colnbrook Community Partnership.





# SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Parish Council Governance Review – Wexham Court Parish Council

**FINAL**

**Internal audit report: 9.18/19**

**7 November 2018**

This report is solely for the use of the persons to whom it is addressed.  
To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party.



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<b>Debrief held</b>	26 July 2018	<b>Internal audit team</b>	Daniel Harris - Head of Internal Audit Chris Rising - Senior Manager Amir Kapasi - Assistant Manager Jay Desai – Assistant Manager
<b>Draft report issued</b>	3 August 2018		
<b>Revised draft report issued</b>	8 October 2018		
<b>Responses received</b>	7 November 2018		
<b>Final report issued</b>	7 November 2018	<b>Client sponsor</b>	Neil Wilcox - Director of Finance and Performance
		<b>Distribution</b>	Neil Wilcox - Director of Finance and Performance

As a practising member firm of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at <http://www.icaew.com/en/members/regulations-standards-and-guidance>.

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This report is released to you on the basis that it shall not be copied, referred to or disclosed, in whole or in part (save as otherwise permitted by agreed written terms), without our prior written consent.

We have no responsibility to update this report for events and circumstances occurring after the date of this report.

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Background

As part of a rolling series of audits of the Parish Councils an advisory audit of Wexham Court Parish Councils governance arrangements was undertaken on behalf of Slough Borough Council as part of the approved plan for 2018/19. The objective of the audit was to ensure that the money being received by the Wexham Court Parish Council (hereafter referred to as the Parish Council) via precept payment is being spent in line with delegated authority. To do this, we reviewed the governance arrangements in place to provide assurance to the Council that the precept collected for parishes was being used as intended.

Wexham Court Parish Council have Standing Orders in place which were adopted by the Council in March 2004 which were last reviewed and updated in April 2011.

Wexham Court Parish Council receives an annual Precept of around £55k and other income for Parish Hall hire which is of around £52k. In addition, the Parish Council employs four employees including; the Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), Booking Clerk and the Caretaker.

Wexham Court Parish Council held £321,540 within its bank account as at the 2017/18 financial year end.

## 1.2 Conclusion

Our review identified that the control framework in place at for the Parish required significant improvement and we identified issues where immediate management action is necessary in relation to the pre-signing of cheques and uploading of confidential meeting minutes to the internet.

Further management actions were identified in relation to the retention of a clear audit trail to demonstrate the decisions being made by the Parish Council, lack of policies and procedures to support the Parish Council in making investment decisions and the use of purchase orders.

## 1.3 Key findings

The key findings from this review have resulted in the identification of three **high priority** and ten **medium priority** management actions, we have ordered these by priority:

### Pre-signing of cheques

Meeting minutes between May 2017 and December 2017 confirmed that 25 blank cheques were being signed at each meeting with one signature during each of the meetings to allow for expenditure to be incurred and paid for by one person, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) without appropriate segregation of duties. Although, cheques required dual signatory, the Council had been agreeing to cheques being signed off with one signature at the Parish Council meetings without the knowledge of what they would be used for, this would then allow payments to be made sooner with only one further signature on each cheque but the Parish Council would be unaware of the commitment until the next Parish Council meeting.

We were informed by \_\_\_\_\_ that this had stopped taking place from the February 2018 meeting and noted the signing of 25 cheques was not included within meeting minutes from February 2018 onwards. Without the correct segregation of duties, the Parish Council face a significant risk of fraudulent expenditure or activity occurring without the knowledge of the Parish Council. **(High)**

## Parish Council Website

We reviewed the Parish Council website and tested to confirm whether the most up to date meeting minutes had been uploaded and found that in several instances private meeting minutes (Part two discussions) had been uploaded to the public website which included employee health issues, complaints and other confidential items. The Parish Council is breaching employee privacy and potentially General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) as it has published meeting minutes with confidential items discussed and these have not been anonymised or excluded. **(Medium)**

## Employment Contracts

No formal contracts of employment for staff employed at the Parish Council are in place. We were informed by [redacted] that the job roles and structure were being reviewed by a HR Consultant from Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC). [redacted] informed us that once the review by BALC is fully completed a new structure would be defined, job roles and descriptors would be re-developed and contracts of employment for all staff will be developed.

As there were no formal employment contracts in place at the time of our review, we were unable to confirm that the Parish Council was paying its employees the correct remuneration or sufficient overtime rates, as you would expect in a terms and conditions section of an employment contract. Therefore, there is a risk that the Parish Council may be under/overpaying its employees. **(High)**

## Delegated Powers

The Parish Council meet on a monthly basis with the exception of August and January however, there is no scheme of delegation in place for this group. We therefore noted that the Parish Council was unable to demonstrate the powers of the Parish Council and what falls within their remit. In addition, we noted that there was lack of documentation which identified the powers delegated to the Clerk and the RFO. Without a scheme of delegation, there is an increased risk of inappropriate expenditure being incurred which could financially impact the Parish Councils finances. **(High)**

## Policies and Procedures

The Parish Council does not have a list of all Policies in place at the council and key policies were absent such as Treasury Management or a Reserves Policy. Therefore, there was no guidance available to the Council, Clerk or the RFO in relation to how to manage the funds held within the Councils bank account which was in excess of £320k at the end of the 2017/18 financial year as established through discussions with [redacted] in June 2018.

There is a risk that the Council may face challenge in relation to the sum of funds held within its bank account and question the protection of these funds with reference to the FSCS (Financial Services Compensation Scheme) limit of £85,000. **(Medium)**

## Key Deadlines Timetable

The Parish Council meeting discussions revolved around nine agenda items at each meeting. The Standing Orders identified some key items which were required to be discussed or approved by the Council including the agreement of the precept however, we noted that this was not captured within the meeting minutes between September 2017 and April 2018. Through review of meeting minutes, we were unable to obtain evidence to confirm that the 2018/19 annual budget was reviewed by the Parish Council. Furthermore, we were unable to evidence the discussion around the precept payment for 2018/19 which was required by the Standing Orders to take place prior to February 2018.

There is a risk that without a clear and formally agreed terms of reference, the Parish Council risk not discussing key areas such as approval of the budget and agreement of the precept. This may result in decisions being made in relation to the matters noted above without the appropriate authority and within the appropriate timescales. **(Medium)**

## Approval of Payments

Following review of the minutes between May 2017 and April 2018, we noted that the minutes in a majority of months documented that 'payments were approved' or 'accounts were approved' or 'approved' however, the papers for the meeting did not highlight the value of expenditure, which therefore did not correspond to the value of the payments approved in the Parish Council meeting minutes. There is a risk that the amounts presented within papers could differ from the agreed payment amounts and adjustments and variations could be approved without the appropriate authority. **(Medium)**

## Risk Register

Through review of the meeting minutes between May 2017 and April 2018, we were unable to evidence review of the risks faced by the Parish Council. Therefore, it was noted that the Parish Council have not approved and documented a Risk Register for 2017/18. There is a risk that the Parish Council is not identifying and regularly reviewing the risks it faces as a Council and this could impact the Parish Council both financially and reputationally if a risk materialises. **(Medium)**

## Declarations of Interests

We were informed that there was no central log of all conflicts for the Councillors which confirmed all interests for each of the Councillors and the agreed actions for the individual where relevant. At each Parish Council meeting, we were able to confirm that an opportunity to declare interests was provided and one Councillor had repeatedly declared an interest however, there was no further information or evidence available which confirmed the action taken or the requirement to take any actions for this declaration of interest, although review of the minutes confirmed that there were no items which would be affected by the declaration.

If the actions following declaration of interest are not sufficiently detailed within meeting minutes, there is a risk of the interest not being managed in the appropriate manner, which could affect the objectivity of decisions made and the reputation of the Parish Council. **(Medium)**

## Finance and General-Purpose Committee

The Parish Council have in place a Finance and General-Purpose Committee for which there is no Terms of Reference or documented responsibilities or meeting requirements. Without a Terms of Reference there is a risk that the committee may not be discharging its duties in line with what is expected of them by the Parish Council. **(Medium)**

## Purchase Orders

We were informed by \_\_\_\_\_ that there was no process in place for the use of purchase orders however, where required quotations or estimates would be obtained to seek the best value for money. Without the use of purchase orders there is an increased risk of queries, disputed and legal consequences should an order for goods or services be processed incorrectly. There is also a financial risk if purchases are committed without appropriate budget / funds being available. **(Medium)**

## Procurement

We requested evidence to confirm that the procurement requirements were complied with in accordance with the finance regulations for four items: heating expenditure, insurance and appointment of both internal and external auditors. We identified that the meeting minutes for the Parish Council included the requirement for approval of items however, there was lack of clarity as to the decisions being made in relation to procuring for goods or services. For heating expenditure, we noted that an initial amount of work was agreed by the Parish Council with a price, and a further amount of work was also agreed but without a price. The meeting minutes did not note whether a further approval was required once the further work had been quoted or whether the Council provided delegated power to the Clerk or the RFO to make the decision. Furthermore, we were informed that the insurance was agreed to be renewed by the Parish Councillors without confirming value for money however, there was no audit trail documented within meeting minutes for this.

Without complete transparency, appropriate use of purchase orders and clearly documented meeting minutes, the Parish Council may not effectively control their expenditure, and this may result in commitment to expenditure which has not been fully agreed. **(Medium)**

### Capital Expenditure Plan

The Capital and General Funds Spend Forecast section within the 2018/19 budget papers was incomplete. We noted that as there was no capital expenditure plan in place for the Parish Council, this may prompt questions regarding the best use of the funds for the local community and may lead to reputational damage in relation to the Parish collecting precept money but not matching the funds collected with the expenditure of the Council. **(Medium)**

In addition, we have also agreed **two low** priority management actions, which are detailed in section two of this report.

## 1.4 Additional information to support our conclusion

The following table highlights the number and categories of management actions made. The detailed findings section lists the specific actions agreed with management to implement.

Area	Control design not effective*		Non Compliance with controls*		Agreed actions		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
Wexham Court Parish Council	8	(9)	1	(9)	2	10	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>				

\* Shows the number of controls not adequately designed or not complied with. The number in brackets represents the total number of controls reviewed in this area.

## 2 DETAILED FINDINGS

### Categorisation of internal audit findings

Priority	Definition
Low	There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency and quality.
Medium	Timely management attention is necessary. This is an internal control risk management issue that could lead to: Financial losses which could affect the effective function of a department, loss of controls or process being audited or possible regulatory scrutiny/reputational damage, negative publicity in local or regional media.
High	Immediate management attention is necessary. This is a serious internal control or risk management issue that may lead to: Substantial losses, violation of corporate strategies, policies or values, regulatory scrutiny, reputational damage, negative publicity in national or international media or adverse regulatory impact, such as loss of operating licences or material fines.

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all internal audit testing undertaken.

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
1.1	Wexham Court Parish Council have Standing Orders in place which were adopted by the Council in March 2004. The Standing Orders document outlines the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting frequency and statutory annual meeting;</li> <li>Chairman of the meeting;</li> <li>Notice of meetings;</li> <li>Attendance and quorum requirements;</li> <li>Order of business;</li> <li>Expenditure;</li> </ul>	No	N/A	<p><b>WCPC Standing Orders</b></p> <p>We obtained the Wexham Court Parish Council Standing Orders and were able to identify through review of the document that it had been last reviewed, amended and approved at the Meeting of Full Council held on 12 April 2011. We obtained the meeting minutes for the meeting held in April 2011 and were able to evidence the approval at this meeting.</p> <p>We noted that the orders were last updated over seven years ago and the document did not outline a regular review requirement or include version control identifying when it had been updated.</p> <p>Without regular review of the standing orders, there is a risk that the Parish</p>	Low	Slough Borough Council will advise Wexham Court Parish Council to update its current standing orders to include version control. In addition, Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to introduce a cyclical review process for its Standing Orders.	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead – Governance
					High	Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to develop a scheme of delegation which outlines key information such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirements for approval of expenditure</li> </ul>	31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead – Governance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees and Sub-Committees;</li> <li>• Annual and Financial Statement;</li> <li>• Interests;</li> <li>• Financial Matters;</li> <li>• Banking Arrangements; and</li> <li>• Standing Orders to be Given to Members.</li> </ul> <p>The Standing Orders do not include version control or outline a next review date.</p>			<p>Council's practices may have evolved and no longer match the standing orders documented and do not comply with the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2018. This may result in incorrect procedures being followed as a result of guidance not reflecting current practice.</p> <p><b>Delegated Powers</b></p> <p>We noted that there was lack of documentation which identified the powers given to the Clerk and the RFO. We noted that the Standing Orders identified that the Council approved all payments which exceed £1,000 however, there was no clarification as to the expenditure below this amount.</p> <p>We were advised through discussion with that all payments below £1,000 can be authorised by the Clerk at the time of expenditure however, upon receipt of the invoice, this must be presented to the Council for review. Therefore, this meant that transactions of up to £1,000 can be made without notification to the Council however, identified that issues with hazards within the parish, which could lead to health and safety implications for residents such as holes in pavements need to be resolved as soon as possible and therefore this delegated authority is used in these scenarios but had not been formally documented.</p> <p>Without a delegated powers document, there is an increased risk of inappropriate</p>		<p>(minimum number of members required);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expenditure limits</li> <li>• Documented powers delegated to the clerk and RFO for the daily running of the Parish Council;</li> <li>• Review requirement to ensure that the terms of reference and powers are subject to regular review.</li> </ul>		



Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				expenditure being incurred which could financially impact the Parish Councils finances.				
1.2	The Parish Council does not have a list of all Policies in place at the council and key policies were absent such as Treasury Management or a Reserves Policy.	No	N/A	<p><b>Policies and Procedures</b></p> <p>During our review, we were informed by that there was no central list of all policies for the Parish Council and subsequently noted that policies such as Treasury Management Policy or Reserves were not in place.</p> <p>We noted that this had therefore meant that there was no guidance available to the Parish Council, Clerk or the RFO in relation to the management of the funds held within the Parish Councils bank account, which was in excess of £320k at the end of the 2017/18 financial year as established through discussions with in June 2018.</p> <p>There is a risk that the Council may face challenge in relation to the sum of funds held within its bank account and question the protection of these funds with reference to the FSCS (Financial Services Compensation Scheme) limit of £85,000 which is covered in the event of a bank collapse. There is a risk that the Council could lose a significant sum of money should the financial services firm where the money is held fail.</p>	Medium	<p>SBC will advise the Parish Council to undertake a review of the policies and procedures in place at the Council and identify where there are gaps within its policies and procedures.</p> <p>The Parish Council will be advised to develop and agree a policy on Treasury Management as soon as possible to support the current situation with its reserves.</p> <p>All policies will be made available to the public through the Parish Council website.</p>	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead – Governance
1.3	The Parish Council do not have a Terms of	No	N/A	We were informed by the Parish Council Clerk that there were no terms of reference	Medium	Slough Borough council will advise the Parish Council to	31sy May 2019	Sushil Thobhani –

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	Reference in place which identifies the purpose and core duties of the Parish Council meetings.  The common agenda items include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declaration of Interests</li> <li>• Dispensation applications relating to Code of Conduct;</li> <li>• Approval of previous meeting minutes;</li> <li>• Police Liaison;</li> <li>• Public Question Time;</li> <li>• Information reports from Members and Councillors;</li> <li>• Finance and General-Purpose Committee meeting minutes approval;</li> <li>• Report of RFO and Finance Statements; and</li> <li>• Report of Clerk.</li> </ul>			in place for the Parish Council meeting which takes place monthly with the exclusion of January and August. We did however note there were standing orders which were adopted by the Parish Council identifying the core meeting requirements such as the requirement to hold an annual meeting, public notice of meetings and quoracy requirements.  Through review of meeting minutes and agendas between September 2017 and April 2018, we were able to confirm that the Parish Council meeting discussions revolved mainly around nine agenda items.  The Standing Orders identified some key items which were required to be discussed or approved by the Parish Council including the agreement of the precept however, noted that this was not captured within the meeting minutes between September 2017 and April 2018.  Through review of meeting minutes noted above, we were unable to obtain evidence to confirm that the 2018/19 annual budget was reviewed by the Parish Council. Furthermore, we were unable to evidence the discussion around the precept payment for 2018/19 which was required by the Standing Orders to take place prior to February 2018.  We did however confirm that this was discussed and approved during the Finance and General Purpose committee however, noted that there was no delegated authority recorded to do this and		develop a timetable which outlines key target dates, meeting schedules and the items to be presented at each meeting. This will allow for them to pro-actively plan for deadlines, papers and items which are required to be delivered at each meeting.  Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to request their bank to provide a report of all cheque numbers which have been transacted, and those which have not been deposited will be cancelled.  The Parish Council will be advised that going forward, the Parish Council should stop all cheques being pre-signed and for each cheque a purchase order, and backing documentation is provided when sign off is required by two individuals.		Service Lead – Governance
	The Standing Orders of the Parish Council identified the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting frequency and statutory annual meeting;</li> </ul>				High		31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2019	Barry Stratfull – Service Lead Finance
					Medium	Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to ensure the meeting minutes for the Parish Council are taken in more detail to ensure there is sufficient audit trail to match the minutes to the papers. More	31 <sup>st</sup> Mat 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead – Governance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chairman of the meeting;</li> <li>Notice of meetings; and</li> <li>Attendance and quorum requirements.</li> </ul> <p>The Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England guidance outlines that Members should review the risk register not less than annually. This could be achieved by risk management being a standing item at authority or committee meetings.</p>			<p>the Standing Orders noted that the Council shall approve written estimates of the precept.</p> <p>There is a risk that without a clear and formally agreed terms of reference, the Parish Council risk not discussing key areas such as approval of the budget and agreement of the precept. This may result in decisions being made in relation to the matters noted above without the appropriate authority and within the appropriate timescales.</p> <p><b>Pre-signing of cheques</b></p> <p>Meeting minutes between May 2017 and December 2017 confirmed that 25 blank cheques were being signed at each meeting with one signature (the other to be provided by the RFO when payments were due) during each of the meetings to allow for expenditure to be incurred and paid for by one person without appropriate use of a segregation of duties.</p> <p>However, we were informed by that this had stopped taking place from the February 2018 meeting and noted the signing of 25 blank cheques was not included within meeting minutes from February 2018.</p> <p>We have still made a note of this as there may be pre-signed cheques available to the staff of the Parish Council which were signed in advance of the change.</p> <p>Without the correct use of a segregation of duties the Parish Council face a significant</p>	Medium	specifically, where payments are authorised the total approved amount will be captured within the meeting minutes.	13st May 2019	Phil Brown – Risk & Insurance Officer

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				<p>risk of fraudulent expenditure or activity occurring without the knowledge of the Parish Council.</p> <p><b>Approval of Payments</b></p> <p>Following review of the minutes between May 2017 and April 2018, we noted that the minutes in a majority of months stated that 'payments were approved' or 'accounts were approved' or 'approved' however we confirmed through review of the papers presented to the meeting that a schedule of payments was not included.</p> <p>While we noted that payments made by cheque were listed in the monthly financial statements, there was no information within the minutes to confirm the total of payments that had been approved.</p> <p>There is a risk that the amounts presented within papers could differ from the agreed payment amounts and adjustments and variations could be approved without the appropriate authority.</p> <p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p>Through review of the meeting minutes between April 2017 and April 2018, we were unable to evidence that the Council had either documented or reviewed the risks faced by the Parish Council. Therefore, it was noted that the Parish Council have not approved and documented the review of the Risk Register for 2017/2018.</p>				

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				There is a risk that the Parish Council is not identifying and regularly reviewing the risks it faces as a Council and this could impact the Parish Council both financially and reputationally if a risk materialises.				
1.4	<p>At each Parish Council meeting, Councillors are asked to confirm whether they have any conflicted interests with matters to be discussed within the meeting.</p> <p>The Parish Council do not have a central register of all Councillor and employee interests.</p>	No	N/A	<p><b>Declarations of Interests</b></p> <p>We were informed during our discussion with [redacted] that one of the Councillors was a Slough Borough Council Councillor and therefore declared this interest in each meeting. During inspection of the meeting minutes between September 2017 and April 2018, we were able to confirm that this was noted as a declaration of interest however, there was no further information or evidence available which confirmed the action taken or the requirement to take any actions for this declaration of interest.</p> <p>While we confirmed through review of the Parish Council minutes that no decisions were taken which would have been affected by the declared interest, if the actions following declaration of interest are not detailed within meeting minutes, there is a risk of the interest not being managed in the appropriate manner, which could affect the objectivity of decisions made and the reputation of the Parish Council.</p> <p>Furthermore, we were informed that there was no central log of all conflicts for the Councillors which confirmed all interests for</p>	Medium	<p>Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to develop a conflict of interest register and an annual declaration of interest form which is collated and recorded within the register.</p> <p>The Parish Council will also be advised that this register should be made available to all staff at each of the Parish Council Meetings for review.</p>	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2019	<p>Sushil Thobhani</p> <p>- Service Lead Governance</p>

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				<p>each of the Councillors and the agreed actions for the individual where relevant.</p> <p>There is a risk that without a central document of all conflicts of interests for members, interests may be missed which could impact and influence the independence of decisions being made at the Parish Council meetings.</p>				
1.5	The Parish Council have in place a Finance and General-Purpose Committee for which there is no Terms of Reference or documented responsibilities or meeting requirements.	No	N/A	<p>We were informed by [redacted] that there was no Terms of Reference in place for the Finance and General-Purpose Committee.</p> <p>We confirmed through review of the Standing Orders that no reference to the Finance and General-Purpose Committee meeting requirements or its responsibilities were made.</p> <p>Through review of the December 2017 meeting minutes of the Finance and General-Purpose Committee, we were able to identify that they had reviewed and agreed the precept and the budget for 2018/19 however we noted that the membership of both committees were different, highlighting a need to ensure the precept was agreed with all Parish Council members.</p> <p>The December 2017 meeting was attended by four of the eleven councillors and the Clerk with apologies from two further councillors.</p> <p>If Terms of reference are not developed, there is a risk that the committee may not be discharging its duties in line with what is</p>	Medium	<p>Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to develop and agree a Terms of Reference for the Finance and General-Purpose Committee which outlines the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of the group;</li> <li>• Membership requirements;</li> <li>• Quoracy requirements;</li> <li>• Attendance requirements;</li> <li>• Meeting frequency; and</li> <li>• Objectives.</li> </ul>	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead - Governance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				expected of them by the Parish Council. This may also lead to difficulty of the Council holding the committee to account if accurate requirements and expectations of the group are not documented.				
1.6	<p>The Standing Orders adopted by the Parish Council outline that the public and press shall be admitted to all meetings of the Council and its committees however, may temporarily exclude the public and press whereby the nature of the business to be discussed is deemed as confidential.</p> <p>The Standing Orders require a three clear days' notice of a meeting to Councillors and the Public.</p> <p>The agenda for meetings are displayed within the notice board outside the building in advance of the meetings.</p> <p>A record of a public participation session at a meeting shall be included in the minutes of that meeting.</p>	Yes	No	<p><b>Public Notice Board</b></p> <p>During discussions, identified that there was a varying level of public participation at all meetings of the Parish Council and any matters which are deemed to be confidential were discussed in a meeting after the public meeting.</p> <p>We were able to confirm through viewing of the public notice board outside the building that there was an agenda for the forthcoming meeting printed and displayed for view by the public on two occasions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuesday 17th April 2018; and</li> <li>• Thursday 21st June 2018.</li> </ul> <p>Through review of meeting minutes between September 2017 and April 2018, we noted that the meeting minutes did not clearly capture the public attendance. The meeting minutes included notes under the agenda item 'public question time' which identified the discussions between the Parish Council and the public however, we were unable to identify whether the number of public attendees within each meeting.</p> <p>There is a risk that the Parish Council are not complying with their adopted Standing Orders should meeting minutes not</p>	Low	<p>Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to ensure that meeting minutes capture public attendance levels to allow for the evidencing of effective public question time matters.</p> <p>Medium Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to review the contents of its website to confirm that the correct meeting minutes are uploaded for view by the public and this excludes all part 2 discussions (private and confidential items).</p>	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead - Governance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	Meeting minutes for meetings are published on the internet for access by the public after the finalisation and agreement of meeting minutes has been confirmed.			<p>effectively capture the level of public participation by not recording the number of individuals involved in discussions or attending meetings.</p> <p><b>Parish Council Website</b></p> <p>We reviewed the Parish Council website and tested to confirm whether the most up to date meeting minutes had been uploaded and found the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 2017 meeting had been cancelled due to failure to meeting quorum;</li> <li>• May 2017 meeting minutes had been uploaded but included the private meeting notes 'Part 2' of the meeting and the document was titled April 2017 meeting minutes;</li> <li>• July 2017, February 2018, March 2018 and April 2018 meeting minutes had been correctly uploaded but also included the private meeting notes under 'Part 2' of the meeting notes; and</li> <li>• The meeting minutes under the title May 2018 were meeting minutes for November 2017 and required updating with the correct set of meeting minutes.</li> </ul> <p>Items discussed under part 2 of the meeting included Parish Council employee health issues, complaints and other confidential items.</p> <p>The Parish Council is currently breaching employee privacy as it has published meeting minutes with confidential items discussed and these have not been anonymised or excluded.</p>				



Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
1.7	<p>No official purchase orders are raised for the purchase of goods or services to ensure that the appropriate authorisation has been obtained prior to the commitment of expenditure by the Parish Council.</p> <p>At each meeting a finance statement is presented to the Parish Council for review and approval. This statement details the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income;</li> <li>Expenditure (including staff costs); and</li> <li>Summary and Bank.</li> </ul> <p>Each element is presented with the actual of the month, actual year to date, budget year to date and variance year to date.</p>	No	N/A	<p><b>Use of Purchase Orders</b></p> <p>We obtained meeting minutes for all meetings between September 2017 and April 2018 and were able to confirm that in each meeting, report of the RFO and Finance Statements were presented.</p> <p>We were informed by [redacted] that there was no process in place for the use of purchase orders however, where required quotations or estimates would be obtained to seek the best value for money.</p> <p>Without the use of purchase orders there is an increased risk of queries, disputed and legal consequences should an order for goods or services be processed incorrectly.</p> <p>The use of purchase orders will allow the Parish Council to ensure that there is a clear audit trail available to confirm what goods or services are being purchased, the agreed cost and clarity on the payment terms.</p>	Medium	<p>Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to implement the use of official purchase orders to approve the purchase of goods and services and this should be coded to an appropriate code in the budget.</p> <p>The Parish Council will also be advised that these will then need to be initialled to agree the details are correctly matched when goods or services have been invoiced to the Parish Council.</p>	31 <sup>st</sup> Mat 2019	Barry Stratfull – Service Lead Finance
1.7b	The Financial Regulations adopted by the Parish Council dated 2006 outlines the following in relation to	Yes	No	We requested evidence to confirm that the procurement requirements were complied with in accordance with the finance regulations for four items: heating expenditure, insurance and appointment of internal and external auditors.	Medium	Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council that where meeting minutes are due for approval, the Clerk will note whether they have been formally	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2019	Sushil Thobhani – Service Lead - Governance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	<p>expenditure and entering into contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenditure which is intended to exceed £60,000 the Clerk must invite tenders from at least three firms;</li> <li>Expenditure which is expected to be within £60,000, the Clerk or RFO must obtain three quotations; and</li> <li>Where the expenditure is below £3,000 and above £100 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain three estimates.</li> </ul> <p>The Financial Regulations outline that all members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An Officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or</p>			<p><b>Heating Expenditure</b></p> <p>Through review of the 2017/18 budget, we were able to confirm that there was planned capital expenditure of £60,000 for the hall heating, hot water and pumps.</p> <p>We obtained evidence of quotes retained for three different suppliers however, noted in one instance the quote did not identify who the supplier was.</p> <p>The chosen supplier was cheapest for the original quote request at £11,427.69+VAT compared to the second cheapest of £15,362+VAT.</p> <p>The actual expenditure invoiced exceeded that of the initially quoted amount due to the decision to replace convection heaters as agreed within the meeting minutes of the Parish Council of September 2017, but this did not include a price for the replacement of the additional works.</p> <p>We noted that the full invoice amount of £18,152+VAT was challenged during the meeting of December 2017.</p> <p>Without the proper use of purchase orders, the Parish Council will not be able to adequately control the approval of the expenditure in relation to items such as the above.</p> <p>Whilst we note that there was no record of approval of a value for the additional works to be carried out by Tencer LTD, there was no challenge documented within the initial</p>		approved. Instances where there is disagreement relating to the content of the meeting minutes, sufficient detail will be captured as to the changes required.		

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	estimates from appropriate suppliers.			<p>agreement to require a quote prior to the commitment of the order.</p> <p>Without complete transparency, appropriate use of purchase orders and clearly documented meeting minutes, the Parish Council may not effectively control their expenditure, and this may result in commitment to expenditure which has not been fully agreed.</p> <p>Through review of meeting minutes for October 2017, we were unable to confirm that the meeting minutes for September 2017 had been confirmed, the meeting minutes for October identified that the July 2017 meeting minutes were approved, but not September 2017 where the decision was made. We reviewed the November 2017 meeting minutes and identified that the October 2017 meeting minutes required re-writing however, it did not include why this was required.</p> <p>There was insufficient audit trail available to confirm that the meeting minutes for September 2017 Parish Council meeting had been formally reviewed and approved. Therefore, we were unable to confirm whether the meeting minutes published for September 2017 provided a true and fair view of the discussions held within the September 2017 Parish Council meeting in relation to the commitment of additional works without a formally agreed quotation.</p> <p><b>Insurance 2018/19</b></p>				

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				<p>We were able to evidence within the July meeting minutes for the Parish Council that insurance expenditure was paid however, were unable to obtain evidence of challenge of the price offered by the supplier of insurance.</p> <p>Through discussion with _____, we identified that it was agreed by the Parish Council that they would accept the quote provided for the year and consider the market in 2018/19. We reviewed meeting minutes between December 2016 and July 2017 to confirm whether this was documented, and we were unable to obtain documented meeting evidence to confirm this was agreed.</p> <p>As noted above, there is insufficient audit trail maintained through meeting minutes due to the level of detail captured within meeting minutes.</p> <p><b>Appointment of Internal Auditors</b></p> <p>The RFO confirmed that the appointment of the Internal Auditors was initially agreed however, due to the medical circumstances of the auditor this did not match the council's timeline due to the deadline for preparation of the annual return.</p> <p>The Parish Council therefore appointed the auditors with the most expensive quote however, the quality of the service to be provided was also taken into consideration as well as the requirement for the completion of the internal audit within a</p>				

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
				<p>small timescale due to the requirement to complete the annual return.</p> <p><b>Appointment of External Auditors</b></p> <p>Through discussions with _____, we were able to confirm that external auditors are assigned to the Parish Council by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments is the sector led company appointed by the then Department of Communities and Local Government (now Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) as the 'specified person' to procure and appoint external auditors to smaller authorities, perform the functions set out in the relevant legislation, and to manage the ongoing audit contracts awarded for the 5 year period commencing 1 April 2017.</p> <p>Furthermore, the RFO provided us with an introductory email confirming that PKF Littlejohn LLP had been appointed as External Auditors for the Parish Council.</p>				
1.8	No formal contracts of employment for staff employed at the Parish Council are in place. The Parish Council did however have procedural guides to the working practices of the following staff members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clerk to the Council;</li> </ul>	No	N/A	<p>The Parish Council does not have formal contracts of employment in place for its current employees. We were informed by _____ that the job roles, structure were being reviewed by a HR Consultant from Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC).</p> <p>We noted that the current procedural guides for working practices were dated between 2006 and 2008 and included outdated information in relation to the</p>	High	Once the review by BALC has been completed, Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to implement new Contracts of Employment for all staff at the Parish Council. These will then be subject to regular review and update to ensure they remain fit for purpose.	31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2019	Surjit Nagra – Service Lead - People

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Clerk (Responsible Finance Officer); and</li> <li>Booking Clerk.</li> </ul> <p>The procedural guides outlined the key duties of the individuals in relation to day to day operations.</p>			<p>Parish Council and required significant levels of updating.</p> <p>We were however, informed by that once the review by BALC is fully completed a new structure would be defined, job roles and descriptors would be re-developed and contracts of employment for all staff will be developed.</p> <p>We were informed that employees of the Parish Council were being paid as per their agreed salaries however, noted that there was additional overtime being added to the financial statements presented each month to the Parish Council for approval.</p> <p>As there were no formal employment contracts in place at the time of our review, we were unable to confirm that the Parish Council was paying its employees the correct remuneration or sufficient overtime rates. Therefore, there is a risk that the Parish Council may be under/overpaying its employees.</p>		The Clerk will also be advised to re-develop the role descriptors and structure of the Parish Council employees following the receipt of advice from the BALC review.		
1.9	<p>The Parish Council budget papers outlined the planned income and expenditure for 2018/19.</p> <p>The Parish Council also outline the forecasted capital expenditure for the year which may include community projects, improvement of current land or buildings</p>	No	N/A	<p>We obtained the 2018/19 budget papers and identified that the Capital and General Funds Spend Forecast was incomplete.</p> <p>Through discussion with , we identified that the balance in the Parish Councils bank account had a significant surge due to an amendment to the lease of the land where the Parish Council Hall and fields are located. We were informed that Slough Borough Council had reclaimed this</p>	Medium	Slough Borough Council will advise the Parish Council to develop and agree a Capital Expenditure Plan for 2018-2021 identifying where it intends to make capital investments to improve the facilities, services or infrastructure within the local community.	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2019	Barry Stratfull – Service Lead - Finance

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management	Implementation date	Responsible owner
	<p>and a general fund for which expenditure is identified as and when required.</p> <p>The Parish Council held in excess of £300k within one bank account at the end of the 2017/18 Financial Year.</p> <p>The Parish Council did not have a long-term Capital Expenditure Plan.</p>			<p>land from the Parish Council for a fee, in order to build new homes.</p> <p>We were informed by [redacted] that the Parish Council hold all of its monies in a single bank account and noted that the account held £321,540 at the end of the financial year 2017/2018.</p> <p>We noted that the FSCS as mentioned above have a claim limit of £85,000. Therefore, there is a risk that the Council may face challenge in relation to the sum of funds held within its bank account and question the protection of these funds with reference to the FSCS (Financial Services Compensation Scheme) limit of £85,000. There is a risk that the Council could lose a significant sum of money should the financial services firm where the money is held fail.</p> <p>Furthermore, we noted that as there was no capital expenditure plan in place for the Parish Council, this may prompt questions regarding the best use of the funds for the local community and may lead to reputational damage in relation to the Parish collecting precept money but not matching the funds collected with the expenditure of the Council.</p>				

# APPENDIX A: SCOPE

The scope below is a copy of the original document issued.

## Scope of the review

The scope was planned to provide assurance on the controls and mitigations in place relating to the following areas:

### Objectives of the area under review

To ensure that the money received via the Precept payment is spent in line with the authority delegated.

When planning the audit, the following areas for consideration and limitations were agreed:

#### Areas for consideration:

As part of a rolling series of audits of the Parish Councils, we will review the Governance arrangements in place to provide assurance to the Council that the precept collected for parishes is being used as intended. This will include review of:

- Whether the statutory duties, powers, and subsequent legal obligations of the Parish Council have been documented and are subject to regular review;
- Whether there is any alignment between Council policies and procedures and Parish documents.
- Whether Parish Councils efficiently prioritise and undertake activities arising from statutory duties, powers, and subsequent legal obligations;
- Whether there is evidence of engagement with local residents and other key stakeholders to deliver the services and facilities required;
- Whether a process is in place for taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk; and
- Whether expenditure is appropriately monitored, recorded, and reported. This will include review of the process for the appointment of auditors to sign off annual accounts.

#### Limitations to the scope of the audit assignment:

The scope of the work will be limited to those areas examined and reported upon in the areas for consideration in the context of the objectives set out in for this review.

- The review has been undertaken on an advisory basis and as such, no opinion has been provided.
- Any testing undertaken as part of this audit will be compliance based and sample testing only.
- The review will not provide assurance of all areas of compliance as it will be undertaken on a sample basis.
- We will not guarantee the accuracy of financial statements but will review the governance around decision making in line with their statutory responsibilities.
- Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.
- The review does not aim to cover all aspects of the Parish Council as this would be impractical for the resources allocated to the review. It aims to provide assurance that the key arrangements outlined above are in place and complied with. As such this review should not be considered to provide assurance over the whole Parish Councils arrangements.