Terms of Reference and Timetable

For a Community Governance Review Of the Virginia Water and Thorpe Neighbourhood Areas

Introduction

Runnymede Borough Council has been approached by the Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider the creation of a parish covering the Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum area.

What is a Community Governance Review

A CGR is a review of part of the Runnymede Borough to consider one of more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election, council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding), and
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping

Why undertake a Community Governance Review?

A CGR provides an opportunity for principal authorities to review and make changes to community governance within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population or in reaction to specific, or local, new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective and convenient and it reflects the identities and interests of the community.

The government has emphasised that ultimately, recommendations made in a CGR ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Considerations of a Community Governance Review

Considerations of a Community Governance Review Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:
a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
b) effective and convenient for the community in that area. In doing so the review is required to consider:

a) the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
b) the size, population and boundaries of the local community or parish

Timetable for the Review

Stage	Approximate Duration	Description
1	CMC 15 October 2026 – Full Council 22 October 2026	**TERMS OF REFERENCE** The Terms of Reference set out the extent and framework of the review. These must be approved by the Council and then published. Once published, the CGR can then formally start.
2	23 October 2026 – 18 December 2026	**INITIAL CONSULTATION** Following publication of the Terms of Reference, the Council undertakes a consultation. Residents in the affected areas, along with elected representatives at all levels, are invited to respond and give their views of community governance in the affected area.
3	CMC – 11 February 2027 – Full Council 25 February 2027	**DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS** Following the consultation, Officers will develop draft recommendations and present these to Council for approval. These will take the consultation responses into account, along with the statutory criteria, government guidance and best practice.
4	26 February 2027 – 9 April 2027	**CONSULTATION ON DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS** Once approved by Council, the Draft Recommendations are published, and a second public consultation commences. This sets out specific recommendations and invites responses to support or disagree with them. Respondents are invited to give additional evidence to support their views where relevant
5	April 2027	**FORMULATION OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS** Taking responses to the consultation into account, the Final Recommendations are developed by Officers.
6	May/June 2027	**FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED** The Final Recommendations must be considered by West Surrey Council
7	TBA	**REORGANISATION ORDER MADE** This legal Order puts any changes into place
8	TBA	**CONSEQUENTIAL MATTERS** Establish an implementation steering group
9	TBA	**ELECTIONS** Date to be agreed as per CGR and Order

Consultation

Before making or publishing Final Proposals, in line with legislative requirements, Runnymede Borough Council will take full account of the views of local people and will comply with legislative requirements by;

a) consulting local government electors for areas under review; consulting any other person or body (including a local authority or elected representative) which appears to the principal (County and Borough) council to have an interest in the review;
b) considering any representations received in connection with the review.

When taking account of written representations, the Council is bound to have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review is;

a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
b) effective and convenient for the community in that area.

In order to ensure that this review is conducted transparently, as soon as practicable the Council will publish its recommendations and take such steps as it is considered sufficient to ensure that people who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them. This will consist of two phases of consultation. The first will seek initial views and desires of residents, groups and stakeholders, and will form the basis of the draft recommendations. The second phase will seek views upon those draft recommendations, to allow final recommendations to be formed.

Consultation and awareness raising will consist of various communication methods, such as direct mailings, media posts (digital and printed), on the ground workshops where viable, and each will explain how residents and stakeholders can submit their views.

The value of local councils

Local parish and town councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level and want to ensure that local governance in the areas subject to this review continue to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges that lie before it.

Electoral arrangements and councillor representation

An important part of the Review will be to consider the 'Electoral Arrangements' and will cover the how a council is constituted for the parish comprising the following:

- The ordinary year in which elections are held;
- The number of Councillors to be elected to the council;
- The division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing Councillors;
- The number and boundaries of any such wards;
- The number of Councillors to be elected for any such ward; and
- The name of any such ward.

The Local Government Act 1972 states that ordinary election of Parish Councillors shall take place in 1976, 1979 and every fourth year thereafter (i.e. 2007, 2011, 2015, etc) However, parish elections may be held in other years to coincide with the cycle for the principal Council, so that the costs of elections can be shared. If the CGR finds that it will be appropriate to hold an election for Parish Councillors, for a newly formed parish, at an earlier date than the next scheduled ordinary elections, the terms of office of any newly elected Parish Councillors will be so reduced as to enable the electoral cycle to revert to the normal cycle in the district at the next ordinary elections.

Runnymede Borough Council notes that the number of Parish Councillors for a parish council shall not be less than five. There is no maximum number and there are no rules relating to the allocation of Councillors. There are, however, guidelines produced both by the National Association of Local Councils and by the Aston Business School and Runnymede Borough Council will be mindful of these during the review. The Government's guidance is that "each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities." Therefore, Runnymede Borough Council is prepared to pay attention to existing levels of representation, the broad pattern of existing council sizes and the take-up of seats at election time.

How to contact us

If you would like to say how you view potential future arrangements under these Terms of Reference, please respond to the online consultation on the Runnymede Borough Council Website or in writing to the Elections Office, Runnymede Borough Council, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2AH: