

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FROM THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE – 29 JUNE 2026

KING'S LYNN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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The Interim Corporate Governance Manager and Corporate Governance Graduate gave a presentation on the King's Lynn Governance review. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Corporate Governance Graduate explained that the consultation ran from early February to late March, exceeding the standard duration to maximise responses. Residents could participate via online or paper surveys, email, or letter. A total of 906 individual submissions were received, with nine joint responses, resulting in 915 respondents. This exceeded the 1–2% response rate goal, making it one of the largest responses to a council consultation. The majority of responses favouring a Parish Council came from within the unparished area.

The leading reason for supporting a Parish Council was the desire for increased local voice and representation, with residents expressing concerns about being overlooked by larger authorities and wanting decisions made by those familiar with King's Lynn. Historic bias in funding and decision-making was also cited. Of the 97 respondents opposed to a Parish Council, the main concern was the potential increase in council tax and the lack of a cap on the precept. Additional opposition stemmed from worries about increased bureaucracy and doubts about value for money, especially during the cost of living crisis.

Councillor Long questioned the difference in precept compared to the current special expenses. In addition, he commented on the history of both King's Lynn and Gaywood and question if a Parish Council had been considered for Gaywood and a Town Council for King's Lynn.

The Corporate Governance Graduate explained the initial consultation included information about the Parish precept, indicating a difference of just under £10 for Band D properties. The interim Corporate Governance Manager provided a further explanation that more detailed financial modelling will be conducted for the second consultation to provide clarity on the precept and its impact.

The Corporate Governance Graduate explained following the consultation, a small number of respondents suggested alternatives such as separate Parish Councils for areas like Gaywood or West Lynn, or the use of ward forums and community associations. However, these alternatives were not widely supported and are unlikely to be pursued further.

In response to Councillor Long, the interim Corporate Governance Manager explained the consultation ran prior to the decision being made on Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Kemp, raised questions about the financial implications of a new Parish Council, with the interim Corporate Governance Manager referred Members to page 83 of the agenda and confirmed that detailed financial modelling and precept information would be included in the second consultation and that special expenses and asset transfers will be clarified.

Councillor Kemp questioned whether 25 Councillors for the new Parish Council number was sufficient for effective representation given the population size. The interim Corporate Governance Manager explained the suggestion of 25 Councillor was based on external consultant input and Boundary Commission principles. Ward boundaries and the allocation of councillors per ward are included in the draft recommendations, with some discrepancies noted between wards. Officers clarified that these are initial suggestions and that the new Parish Council can review and adjust boundaries and representation after establishment.

Councillor Kemp queried the planning powers of the proposed Parish Council. Officers explained the proposed Parish Council would have a planning committee acting as a consultee on planning applications, similar to other Parish Councils, but would not have the authority to make binding decisions or call in applications.

In response to questions from Councillor Everett and Long, the Chair, Councillor Beales explained the Structural Changes Order (SCO) could possibly be laid in December so earlier than anticipated and despite the Judicial Review preparations for Local Government Reorganisation was to continue.

Councillor Parish emphasised the need for transparency regarding what residents would pay extra for and how costs would be allocated. Officers committed to making these details clear in the second consultation and to working with finance staff to clarify the handling of special expense. He commented on the importance of having local representation.

Councillor Dickinson raised concerns about the response rate to the first consultation and asked what steps would be taken to improve engagement in the second phase. Officers and consultants considered the response rate to be robust for this type of consultation, noting that every household received a letter and that the response exceeded typical rates for similar exercises. For the second consultation, officers plan to maintain or enhance communication and engagement activities, including hard copy letters and publicity, to encourage higher participation and ensure the process remains defensible.

In response to Councillor Blunt, the Chair, Councillor Beales explained the new Parish Council could develop a neighbourhood plan, which was not currently possible due to the lack of a qualifying body. However, the role and influence of neighbourhood plans are expected to change with upcoming planning reforms.

The Interim Corporate Governance Manager explained the draft recommendations which reflected the priorities identified in the consultation, such as preserving civic identity and ensuring local representation. Officers have developed draft recommendations with the proposal scheduled to go to Full Council at the end of July. If approved, a second consultation was to run in September and October, followed by

the drafting of final recommendations and a reorganisation order in November and December. Charter trustees may be used as an interim measure to preserve civic traditions if necessary. The second consultation will seek resident views on the draft recommendations, including detailed financial modelling, ward boundaries, and the scope of services and assets to be transferred.

The Committee raised concerns on logistical matters such as the use of the Town Hall along with questions concerning assets including play areas, public conveniences and civic elements. The interim Corporate Governance Manager explained allotments were a statutory assets which was to be transferred however other assets were to be discussed due to funding and revenue generated by the assets. Following Members requests, Officer agreed to hold a Member Briefing.

Specific concerns were raised about representation for areas like West Lynn, which is grouped with South Lynn in the draft. The interim Corporate Governance Officer and the Monitoring Officer and Chief of Staff explained that while the current proposal aims for balanced representation, the final arrangements will be determined by the new council.

Officers explained that special expenses currently charged to the unparished area may remain unless services are transferred to the new Parish Council. Only statutory allotments are guaranteed to transfer on day one, with other assets and services subject to negotiation.

The committee reviewed the consultation analysis, agreed the draft recommendations, and determined to recommend proceeding to the next stage, including a second public consultation with explicit reference to potential precept information following Councillor Long proposed amendment to the third recommendation.

RESOLVED: The Committee

1. Reviewed the analysis of consultation responses.
2. Considered and agreed the draft recommendations developed by Officers considering the consultation findings.
3. Determined and recommended to Full Councils that Officers should proceed to the next stage of the Review, including undertaking a second phase of public consultation, including potential precept for 2027/2028.
4. Delegated authority to the Interim Corporate Governance Manager Interim to make the required arrangements for the second consultation phase, including finalising the draft recommendations, communication and engagement activity