

Community Governance Review 2017 – Background Information

Please retain for your records

Why is Cheltenham Borough Council carrying out a community governance review?

The Pittville Parish Council Campaign Group submitted a valid petition to Cheltenham Borough Council in January 2017, calling for the creation of a new parish council for Pittville. This means Cheltenham Borough Council is required under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to carry out a community governance review to decide whether or not it should be created. The review must be completed within 12 months of receipt of the petition (by January 2018).

What does a parish council do?

Parish councils are the most local form of government. Parish councils are usually made up of local people who stand for election as (unpaid) parish councillors to represent their area, usually for a four year term. They can be the voice of the local community and work with other tiers of government and external organisations to co-ordinate and deliver services.

Setting a policy direction for a new parish council would be the responsibility of the first elected Parish Councillors. However, parish councils provide facilities such as allotments, bus shelters, village halls, children's playgrounds, parks, noticeboards and in the case of larger councils, sometimes also street lights and playing fields. They can have an input to planning, and are statutory consultees for individual planning applications. There are currently five other parish councils in Cheltenham.

How much would it cost to have a parish council?

Households within a parish are subject to what is known as a 'precept', which is the amount of council tax added to the bill per household and can only be used by the parish council to run itself and to invest in the area to deliver or improve services or facilities for which they have the legal powers.

The amount is based on the number of households within the parish, and the cost of the services the council provides. It will be for the parish councillors to decide the amount of the precept each year based on the costs of the services they will provide, but Cheltenham Borough Council will need to set the precept for the first year. The Pittville Parish Council Campaign Group has suggested that the cost per household in a Band D property PER YEAR will be no more than £24.

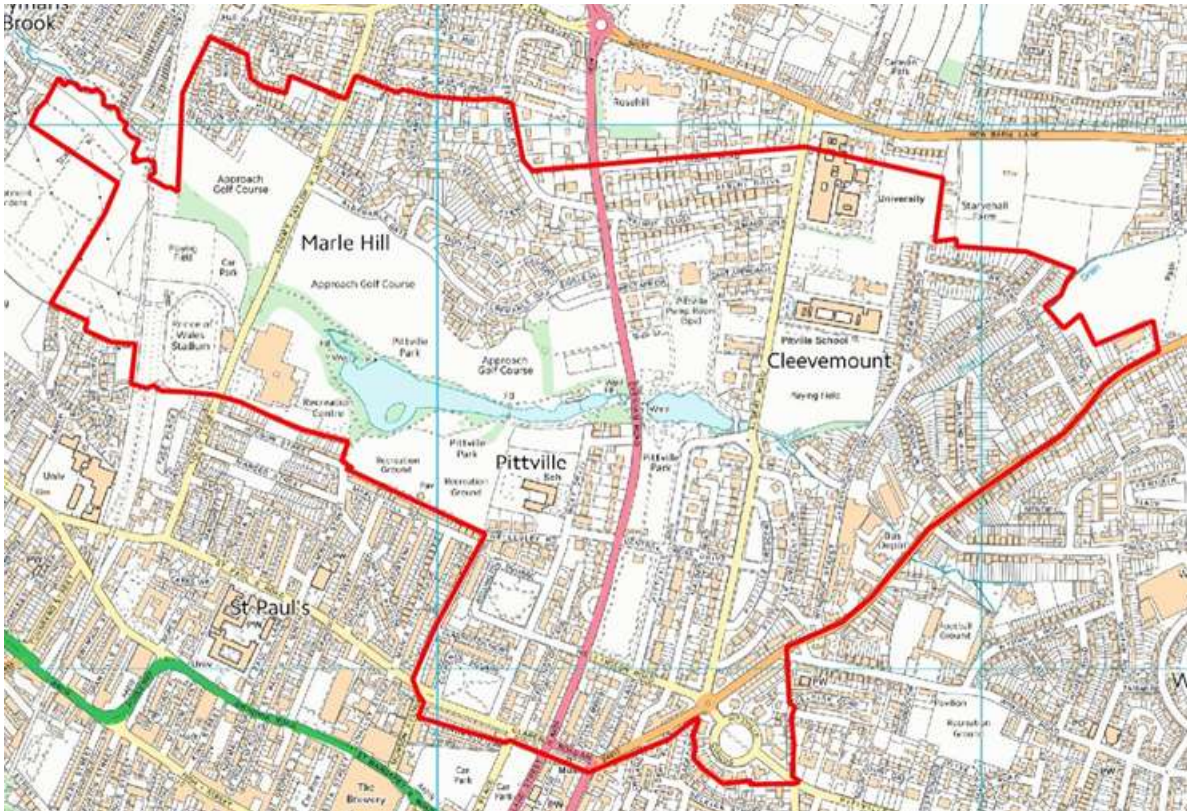
Other forms of community governance

There are other (non-parished) forms of community governance which residents could set up to represent their local community and for which there would be no increase in council tax. These include area or community forums, residents associations and community associations.

What sets parish councils apart from other kinds of community governance is the fact that they are a democratically elected tier of local government, independent of other council tiers and budgets, and possess specific powers and statutory rights and responsibilities. This is an important distinction to make. Parish councillors are able to represent their local communities in a way that other community-based bodies cannot as they are elected via an election that all electors in the area can participate in.

Proposals map

The map below shows the proposed Pittville Parish Council boundary. Within this boundary, we are consulting with all local electors to see whether the majority of respondents would like to be represented by a parish council or not. We will also take into consideration any other representations received, for example from stakeholders, businesses and public sector organisations in the area and residents from adjacent areas, but the responses from electors within the proposed boundary will be the main basis upon which the decision will be made.



How to respond to this consultation

Cheltenham Borough Council will use the responses received to decide whether there is sufficient support for creating a new parish council. Please take the time to have your say by completing the response slip and returning it in the freepost envelope provided.

Alternatively, you can respond online at www.cheltenham.gov.uk/community-governance-review. You will need to enter your unique identification code which is provided on the attached letter.

All responses must be received by 8 October 2017

Many thanks for taking the time to respond to this consultation. Further details about the review and the results of this consultation (once completed) will be published at www.cheltenham.gov.uk/community-governance-review

For further information please contact: communityservices@cheltenham.gov.uk or 01242 262626.