

Responses made in response to the Community Governance Review

Apart from redacting personal details, the responses are reported as received.

[1] In response to your request for feedback on town and parish councils I would like to say that Harpenden Town Council is fantastic and should not be changed. They care about Harpenden and the facilities and amenities they look after, working hard to improve and maintain them to ensure Harpenden is a place we can be proud of. They also put on an excellent range of popular community events and are not afraid to try different things. If anything, I would like to see them having more control and oversight over local facilities e.g the new leisure centre and the EMC so that these too can be operated to the highest standards.

Resident of Park Avenue South, Harpenden

[2] I am delighted that this review is taking place because residents of the “unparished” areas of St Albans have lacked their own third tier local government for many years, and thereby have been partially disenfranchised.

In theory the District Council’s “CNC Committee” has carried out the functions which otherwise would have been handled by a town or parish council. In practice this has become a sub-committee of SADC with very little representation from residents. Selected Residents’ Associations - with official constitutions - have been invited to send representatives to attend meetings but there has been no opportunity for ordinary residents even to know what goes on. Since there is a statutory precept (part of the Council Tax) available for use by the third tier level of government in effect this has been scooped into the CNC’s account in the general SADC funds and residents have little say in how it is used.

Town and Parish Councils have the power to set the level of their precept - within limits - and to use the funds as they see fit. In my experience as a Chairman of a village parish council I know that local residents - if given the opportunity - take an interest, vote for what they want done and agree the necessary precept to fund it. Local examples in Harpenden and Sandridge show how effective this form of local government can be. We should be able to do the same here in St Albans.

Because of the size of the present unparished area, and the disparate characteristics included, it may be appropriate to establish more than one “parish council”. For example, it might be sensible to have one council covering the conservation area and one or more covering the rest, but all residents should be entitled to the level of democratic representation enjoyed by the majority of the country’s population.

Resident of Fishpool Street, St Albans

[3] [The Society of St Michael's and Kingsbury] would like to express our view that we feel that the current working arrangements for the unparished areas of St Albans is unsatisfactory and contributes to a democratic deficit for our residents. While the many residents' associations covering most if not all of the unparished areas work hard in conjunction with the District Council through the Combined Residents Associations it's a poor substitute for representation through a Parish Council.

There are principally two reasons for this:

1) Lack of resources and funding. Resident's Associations (RAs) rely entirely on voluntary efforts and by the nature of these activities the burden of work falls on a few residents, who give what time and energy they can to the task. The only funding for this work is from resident's subscriptions that mostly is spent on communication with their members. These two factors significantly limit the RAs to adequately represent the views of their members as there is insufficient resource to carry out the "officer" burden of work created by trying to coordinate the disparate views of 18 or so RAs and communicating these to SADC.

2) Although RAs are set up based on constitutions and members elect officers at their respective AGMs the officers cannot carry the same democratic impact and accountability as elected Parish Councillors.

As a Residents Association we would like to propose that the area similar to that of The Society of St Michael's and Kingsbury should become part of St Michael's Parish. As we are proposing that our residents should be covered by an existing Parish Council, which I understand is potentially losing residents due to proposed boundary changes, we believe this could be achieved with the least administrative burden possible and reinvigorate an existing Parish.

The Society of St Michael's and Kingsbury

[4] Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

My principal concern with the current governance arrangements is the clear democratic imbalance which exists between the 8 parishes and Harpenden town whose 65,000 electors can elect 90 parish and town councillors to their respective councils and the unparished areas whose 46,000 electors have no equivalent voice in determining the membership of the current City Neighbourhoods Committee.

From experience of the operation of the City Neighbourhoods Committee I am also concerned that, as currently constituted, it is inherently unable to provide meaningful oversight of policy and budget decision making. For example

- no programme of proposed works is presented for approval
- no detailed rationale is provided to justify either the level of special expenses proposed each year or the proposed use of Ward budgets for CNC purposes
- insufficient financial information is provided to enable proper scrutiny of the budget [for example income is not shown and there is no clarity as to how much income is retained as part of the CNC budget and how much is apportioned to SADC general funds]

With that in mind I would like the Review to give detailed consideration to

- 1) the pros, cons and potential cost implications of establishing a Town/City Council for the unparished area
- 2) means by which the CNC could be made more representative and empowered to provide more effective scrutiny and
- 3) scoping the potential for the CNC to become a better conduit for discussion of broader matters of concern to City Centre residents such as traffic management

Resident of Upton Avenue, St Albans

[5] (a) Hello I live in Boissy Close, St Albans. We are part of Colney Heath Council which is baffling as we are nowhere near Colney Heath. When will the proposal to bring us under a St Albans parish happen. Thanks

(b) Hello as a long time resident of Boissy Close I feel we need to be in a St Albans parish. Being in the Colney Heath parish is no good for us as the councillors rightly provide service to a village

We are not physically near the Village of Colney Heath and none of our raised concerns have ever been acted on

We are in St Albans and our parish and council should reflect this

Resident of Boissy Close

[6] From Harpenden Town Council

Scope included in the Terms of Reference	HTC recommendations and relevant factors
Creation of a Parish/Town Council	<p>Harpenden The creation of a Parish/Town is not required in Harpenden as Harpenden Town Council already exists and provides effective administration and representation.</p> <p>The Town Council focuses on developing a strong sense of community and place. It connects with local residents and has a clear set of priorities that deliver improvements for the community through its Business Plan.</p> <p>Unparished Area The Town Council does not have any representations to make at this stage regarding the creation of a Parish/Town Council in the currently unparished area of the District.</p>

	<p>However, should a proposal be submitted as part of this consultation to form a Parish/Town Council then the Town Council would make representations later in the CGR process. These representations would focus on the financial aspect of the creation of a Parish/Town Council, in particular the use of Special Expenses and the funding of assets/services to ensure that Harpenden residents are not negatively impacted.</p>
<p>Name of a Parish/Town Council</p>	<p>No change is required as per the first representation regarding Harpenden above.</p>
<p>Establishment of a separate Parish Council for an existing Parish</p>	<p>No change is required as per the first representation regarding Harpenden above.</p>
<p>Alteration of boundaries of existing Parishes/Town Councils</p>	<p>Harpenden South The Town Council recommends that changes are made in relation to Harpenden South.</p> <p>Following the Boundary Commission Review a number of streets have moved from the Wheathampstead district ward to the Harpenden South ward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croftwell • Long Buftlers Poynings Close <p>What this will mean in practice from 2022 is that these 86 households will be represented by a Harpenden District Councillor and a Wheathampstead Parish Councillor. Any Precept that is due for the properties will relate to Wheathampstead and this includes the Precept to the Parish Council and any Special Expense for the area.</p> <p>In making these changes the Boundary Commission noted that these streets are contiguous to the built-up area and allow a clear distinction to be made between the urban and rural communities in this area.</p> <p>The Town Council requests that the streets that were realigned from Wheathampstead to Harpenden through the District Boundary Review should also be aligned to the Town/Parish boundaries i.e. these streets should form part of</p>

	<p>the Harpenden Town Council boundary and not the Wheathampstead Parish boundary.</p> <p>The relevant factors for making this change were documented by the Boundary Commission however, the key point in the Town Council's view is that this change would reflect the identifies and interests of the streets in question.</p> <p>Please also see further comments below.</p>
Abolition of a Parish/Town Council	<p>The Town Council is not making any requests in relation to this element of the scope. However, it does note that following the Boundary Commission Review, the existing Harpenden North ward and Harpenden Rural Parish form one ward. In making this change the Boundary Commission noted that Harpenden Rural Parish has clear geographic links to Harpenden, and can be placed in a ward with the urban area while still providing for effective and convenient local government.</p> <p>Harpenden Rural Parish Council currently exists as an administrative unit. The Town Council has not considered in detail whether the existing Harpenden Rural Parish Council administrative boundaries should be changed and whether an amendment to the Harpenden Town Council boundary to include the Rural Parish Council area would result in a more effective delivery of local services in that rural area.</p> <p>As a result, the Town Council is not making any representations either way on these boundaries, however we are keen to understand the views of St Albans City & District Council and Harpenden Rural Parish Council on these existing boundaries through the consultation process.</p>
Dissolution of a Parish Council/Town Council;	No recommendations.
Changes to the electoral arrangements of a Parish Council/Town Council;	See representations made above.
Whether a Parish should be grouped under a common Parish Council or degrouped	No recommendations.

[7] As the recently elected chair of a residents' association (RA) based in the conservation area of St Albans, I was surprised and disheartened to sense the despondency of my fellow RAs at the first meeting I attended of the Community Neighbourhoods Committee (CNC) last year.

I quickly gained the impression that the quarterly meeting was designed primarily to provide information about city-related district council activity to the RAs, with little opportunity for comment with reasonable prior preparation or the ability to influence any of these activities on our part.

Recently, the RAs have singularly and collectively expressed their strongly held view that the manner in which the CNC operates must change to give the RAs a real voice and real influence.

With the advent of the Community Governance Review, however, I am of the view that further consideration should be given to forming a third tier of elected representatives in the unparished areas of St Albans as a more effective alternative to the current set-up.

What this could entail for members of the Fishpool Street Residents' Association (FSRA) should be open to further consultation, as it would appear there are potentially a number of options for establishing this third tier in our neighbourhood. I understand these may include:

- 1) Joining a newly formed St Albans City Council, on similar parish lines to Harpenden Town Council.
- 2) Joining an existing parish council adjoining our area, namely St Michael Parish Council.
- 3) Forming a separate and distinct parish council encompassing the conservation area of St Albans.

My initial thoughts are that setting up a City Council would be best option. However, residents will undoubtedly need more information before deciding whether to agree to change in some form or to stick with the status quo.

I would like to recommend that St Albans continues to the next phase of the review.

Chair of Fishpool Street Residents' Association

[8] I am sure you are aware but my ward of MWN currently all falls within Sandridge parish. As does the Jersey Farm/Sandridge ward

With the split into MWE/MWW the parish as it stands will cover MWE and part of MWW and part of the new Sandridge/Wheathampstead ward.

Sandridge village, from which the parish council takes its name (but oddly which is not part of St Albans MP constituency) will now be paired with Wheathampstead, which already has its own parish council.

I would expect some redefining of parish boundaries might be helpful.

One problem would be that the split into MWE and MWW is quite arbitrary and on the new edges of these 2 wards are the centre of "Marshalswick village", i.e. the Quadrant shops /M&S and library/community centre, and the 2 churches.

It would be odd to use the split between MWE and MWW for a parish boundary for this reason (not good for the ward to be split there either).

Former District Councillor

[9] I have been revisiting this anomaly and have a couple of points to make.

In the new district wards we have the absurd situation of numbers 1,3 5,2 and 6 (there is no No.4!) Rose Walk in Marshalswick West and not in Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm as is the remainder of Rose Walk, a further 29 properties. I fully agree [...] that 1 to 6 should be in Sandridge Parish and that the District Council has the power to make this alteration.

However, is there any way that the District Boundaries can be amended to align them with Parish wards? My neighbours find it mystifying that they have a different set of candidates to vote for compared to all the other properties in Rose Walk.

Sandridge Parish Councillor

[10] Sandridge Parish Council discussed this matter last night and asked me to respond as follows;

Please consider not putting Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm in a single ward (8 seats). The Parish Council would like two wards of four seats each to allow more local representation with each place.

Sandridge Parish Council

[11] [a]In case my submission via the website has not been received. In summary Harpenden Town Council is doing a fine job across all aspects and if anything deserves more powers as the town has grown. The case for a separate Harpenden Rural Parish Council is weak in the light of how Harpenden had developed - Rothamsted Estate and Kinsbourne Green are now part of the overall Harpenden community.

Resident of Avenue St. Nicholas, Harpenden

[12] I am a resident of Sleapshyde in the parish of Colney Heath.

Regarding the CGR my view is that Colney Heath Parish should be aligned with the District ward of Colney Heath plus ward HLC within the Hill End DC ward. This would create a parish dominated by rural communities and green belt open space. It would then retain historic links to the area formerly within the Parish prior to the building of the housing estates on the hospital sites of Hill End and Cell Barnes.

Resident of Smallford Lane

[13] I want to stay within St Michael Parish, by taking out residents in Ragged Hall Lane you reduce the funds that Parish gets. We have a historic link with rural Hertfordshire including Redbourn. Some of us find quirky agreeable. Hitchin and Harpenden changing to Berkhamsted, haven't been there for years (ref. MP)

Take a look at the SA City boundary, it too comes and goes in the lane at this point.

Resident of St Michael Parish Council

[14] London Colney Parish Council have considered carefully how best to respond to this review, which will have consequences for the future of the parish for years to come.

As with our response to the Boundary Commission Review in February 2020, the parish council maintains that London Colney is a discrete community, with its boundaries delineated by major road networks. There is a strong sense of community identify, reinforced by residents' proactive interaction with the parish council.

We acknowledge that London Colney is one of the most densely populated wards in terms of area and we have maintained in our previous representations to not remove Napsbury from the District Council ward, because it would adversely affect our community cohesiveness, but this was implemented anyway. Therefore, we believe it imperative that any changes to the parish boundaries are carefully considered in light of the previous changes.

We have therefore consulted with St Stephen's Parish Council regarding our mutual boundaries and are grateful to the support and advice provided by the Elections Department of the District Council during this process.

We would comment as follows on potential amendments to the boundary:

- We agree with the proposal to include 4 properties in Suffolk Close and 24 properties in North Cottages, Napsbury to be removed by Cunningham Ward and relocated into the parish, with the inclusion of the parish precept. This proposal seems sensible as these residents will have been enjoying the parish council's facilities.

- We considered redrafting the parish boundary between St Stephens and London Colney to run along the railway line, which would follow the Boundary Commission's rationale for the redrawing of boundaries along manmade or topographical features however, we felt that this did not benefit either the parish council or residents.
- We are aware of the proposal to create two wards in London Colney: Napsbury with 2 councillors and London Colney with 7 councillors. We are concerned that this would make one ward significantly larger than the other which would have an adverse financial impact on the parish council's finances in the event of a byelection. We would consider the division of the parish into two roughly equal wards, perhaps along an east/west divide with the High Street, another manmade structure, as a boundary line. Polling stations can then be kept to a minimum of 2 stations per ward.

We trust that the suggestions outlined in this letter meet with a receptive audience at the District Council who are responsible for the implementation of this review, which will come into effect in May 2023, in time for the next parish council elections. We are confident that you will follow the principles of the Guidance for Community Governance Reviews to consider factors such as the identities and interests of London Colney; what impact proposed community governance arrangements might have on community cohesion and whether the proposed changes make sense on the ground.

London Colney Parish Council

[15] I would like to make my views known for the Community Governance Review. I live in central St Albans, an area not represented by a parish council.

It seems unfair for residents in central St Albans to not have independent representation by a parish council. We are a significant proportion of the electorate, though our neighbourhoods have the least democratic representation in the district. This absence of local government representation means residents lack a local voice and a body to ensure the best interests of the local community are pursued.

The current arrangements are suboptimal and should be addressed.

Resident of the unparished area of St Albans

[16] The ARA welcomes this Community Governance Review. We are making many efforts to be fully engaged, but at this stage in the process, we feel we need to know more about what benefits, limitations and costs a town/city council could bring to St Albans, and whether and how it would be an improvement on CNC, before we can make any useful or informed decision.

There are many flaws with the current governance arrangement, which constitutes a democratic imbalance with our immediate neighbour. Harpenden's 65,000 electors can elect 90 parish and town councillors to their respective councils but in the unparished areas of St Albans, the

46,000 electors have no equivalent voice in determining the membership of the current City Neighbourhoods Committee.

This is a difficult one for our members to engage with, and we would like to see SADC step up here and do more to generate greater engagement with the wider community. This is not a task that should be left to RAs. We ourselves do not feel sufficiently well-briefed, nor are we funded in any way to generate this information. Sharing links to a SADC website does not suffice here.

Aboyne Residents Association feels it cannot take a position until we know more about the scope, pros, cons, and costs of the different options. How might subjects covered in CNC, albeit inadequately but often at our request (such as city centre planning, traffic management and toilets) be dealt with in a town/city council model? How might this enable residents to engage and be better briefed? We need to know much more about what we are being asked to choose between here. We are therefore requesting a detailed analysis of the pros and cons of establishing a town/city council for the unparished areas, and also a more forensic exploration of realistic and imaginative ways in which CNC could be made more representative and empowered to provide more effective governance and a better conduit for discussion and implementation of broader matters of concern to city centre residents.

June is the next CRG deadline, when officers will present proposals. We urge more dialogue between now and June. Specifically, we are looking for more options, and a much more detailed breakdown and explanation of these options, than currently seem to exist. This is a detailed matter with important implications for the governance of the unparished areas, and a rare opportunity to improve accountability and delivery of services, and possibly right a democratic deficit. This initial consultation, although useful and engaging, has been short.

We would certainly welcome an improvement to the status quo. The City Neighbourhood Committee, as currently constituted, is inherently unable to provide meaningful oversight of policy and budget decision making. We hope that together we can find a more effective, more democratic way forward.

Aboyne Residents Association

[17] [The Combined Residents Association...] represents 11 of the central St Albans Residents and Community associations, regarding the Community Governance Review, currently about to meet its first consultation deadline.

This deadline is difficult, because at this point it is simply not clear what benefits, limitations and costs a town or city council might bring and whether and how it would be an improvement on the current, often unsatisfactory, City Neighbourhood Committee.

In our individual emails regarding the CRG review, we will have expressed much more detailed views about the CGR and the opportunity it may offer to address the democratic deficit that is apparent when St Albans is compared to its near neighbours with a more traditional parish council set-up.

Our message in this joint email is that right now, we simply do not know enough to take any kind of position on the options that may be open to us as a community. We speak as a group of RA chairs who are already well versed in the workings of SADC, who have attended the presentations on the subject, and who have now done research of our own on the subject. But this is complicated territory and we have many more questions than answers at this point.

Engaging our members is tricky, as the subject does not trigger interest, only bewilderment. We feel SADC could usefully do more to generate greater engagement from the wider community. RAs have done what they can to inform members, but there has been little response and sharing a link to a website is not enough.

The first stage of the consultation has succeeded in as far as we are now hopefully all asking the right questions. But it's a big jump from this stage to considering proposals in June. We are concerned that there is a comprehension gap, which needs to be more fully appreciated and addressed.

We need to be far better briefed about the scope, pros, cons, options and costs - about how subjects currently covered by CNC might map to a town or city council set up - and about the various geographical options and how they might work. We therefore urge that this next stage of consultation is used to engage with and begin to answer these specific questions, to give a much clearer picture of the advantages any new arrangement might bring, or how the current set-up might be improved.

We welcome this opportunity to look at the governance of our local area in more detail and the opportunity to work with SADC on taking this review to the best possible conclusion.

Central St Albans Combined Residents Associations

[18] This response is on behalf of St Albans Civic Society and we have the following comments in relation to this review:

The unparished area of St Albans is at a disadvantage compared with the parished areas because it doesn't have the autonomy that Harpenden Town Council and Parish Councils have in making decisions in relation to issues and assets within their areas. All decisions relating solely to the unparished area are currently made by the full District Council and communicated via the City Neighbourhoods Committee. We consider that there is clear merit in exploring in more detail the possibility of a City Council for St Albans and recommend that further detailed work is done to research further the issues which include

- What are estimated to be the net additional costs of creating a City Council, taking account of expected savings in the District Council itself
- The expected benefits to local democracy and increased feelings of ownership by residents
- What assets and amenities would be expected to move to the responsibility of a City Council and what would remain the responsibility of the full District Council. Examples are the Charter Market, Verulamium Park, etc
- Bearing in mind that the unparished area accounts for around 40% of the total population of the District, what are expected to be the wider impacts of the formation of a City Council? To what extent might this result in duplication? Should boundaries of existing parishes be revised to possibly include some parts of the unparished areas?

If Hertfordshire is in future converted to one or more Unitary Authorities then formation of a City Council will be required so it makes good sense to do the detailed work now.

We would welcome the opportunity to have further discussions with the review team.

St Albans Civic Society

[19] St Albans Labour Party considered the numbers of electors in Parish and Town council areas as detailed in the information supplied with the notice of the consultation and noted the following issues:

- 1) The huge differences in the number of electors in some parish council areas, ranging from 333 in Harpenden Rural and 388 in St Michael to 11,456 in St Stephen parish.
- 2) Harpenden with a current electorate of 22,900 has a town council structure with 16 councillors, whereas central St Albans with a current electorate of 45,717 has no lower tier of local government at all.

Advantages of parish and town council organisations

- a)** The town and parish councils offer the district council an efficient and fair means of consulting local communities about plans that will affect their localities. Parish and town councillors are close to their communities and able to publicise plans from higher tiers of local government at a very local level. They are able to use their meeting structure to hear views from local residents and feed back to the District Council.
- b)** Parish and town councils have a right to comment on planning applications within their boundaries and make comments to the District Council planning department.
- c)** Most significantly, parish and town councils receive an amount from the council tax collected within their boundaries (the precept) which they are able to use as the parish or town council members decide.

Contrast with unparished areas

a) Consultations with the 45,000 plus electors of central St Albans are much more diffuse and random, other than through the ward councillors who represent thousands of residents and must also consider the interests of the population across the whole of the district.

b) Residents can comment as individuals on planning applications but the District Council is only obliged to notify immediate neighbours.

c) Consultations on the council's plans for changes in local wards and neighbourhoods are run online and publicised through the press and other local publications. However it is up to local residents to be aware of consultations and to respond as individuals.

d) The District Council may call on local residents associations to comment on changes. However, these groups vary a great deal in their range and purposes and may cover a whole ward or just a single street. Perhaps inevitably, these volunteer-run groups do not always succeed in reflecting the full range of views within the communities they serve and support.

e) In recent years an extra amount was added to the council tax charge in the unparished wards of the town, ostensibly to bring it more in line with the amounts paid by residents in parish and town council areas. However, control of funds raised in this way remains with the district council. Following concerns about accountability, a consultative committee was set up, but with no control of the budget it is advisory only. This is not at all comparable with the control of the precept by parish and town councils.

CONCLUSIONS

1) St Albans Labour Party calls on the District Council to address the very significant deficit in local democracy that exists by establishing a Town/ City council to cover all the unparished wards within central St Albans. The local Labour Party believes that this will fulfil several of the criteria in the Review given as reasons to make changes to local community governance, as follows:

It will reflect the following that clearly exist within central St Albans

- a sense of place
- a place with a 'positive' feeling for people and local distinctiveness
- a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride
- a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector

2) St Albans Labour Party also recommends that the District Council consults with parish councils on the possibility of resolving some of the disparities that exist in the numbers of electors within parish councils by altering boundaries or other adjustments.

St Albans Labour Party

[20] I am writing as a representative of Sopwell Residents Association (SRA). Following a meeting to discuss the Community Governance Review I have been asked to provide feedback from SRA.

Preamble

The review comes at a time when SRA committee members had been considering various ways to access more community powers for Sopwell, including the idea of becoming a parished ward.

This arose from a general sense that Sopwell residents' needs have historically not been well represented and the ward may have been missing out in terms of beneficial developments/resources. SRA has been exploring ideas that would help us both (i) increase resources available to the ward and (ii) ensure that the needs of the local community were heard in any future developments for the city and for Sopwell. As Sopwell is one of the most deprived wards in the district we were however concerned that residents would find it difficult to accept increased precepts.

City Council

So the committee was very interested in the idea of a new City Parish Council - identified as an option in the Governance Review- covering all the unparished wards in the city - and asks for this to be looked at in more detail.

Our understanding is that the officers are able to do more research on what forms this might take, and explore various options, in particular regarding different sizes and reach of such a council, and financial impacts for local residents - including impacts for residents with varying incomes/benefits.

From discussions in the City Neighbourhood Committee on this issue I am unclear about what degree of detail officers' research would cover.

So we would ask that further meetings with representatives from the unparished wards be set up:

- a) to allow us all to explore the idea of a 'city parish council' in more depth
- b) to understand where it would be helpful for representatives/residents ourselves to do further research

I look forward to hearing the responses to the consultation.

Committee Member of Sopwell Residents Association

[21] Harpenden Rural Parish Council, while covering a large area, has the least number of properties of any parish in the St. Albans District Council and the smallest electorate at 333 residents (June 2021). Settlements are based around Kinsbourne Green Common and surrounding lanes; the Annables Estate (Spring Road/Chamberlaines); and the settlement of Harpendenbury near Redbourn golf club.

The Parish Council was established in 1894 and as belies its name, Harpenden Rural comprises mainly agricultural/green belt land, including the Rothamsted estate, and that character has changed little over subsequent decades. The rural nature of the Parish reflects the identities and interests of the community with horse riding being very popular locally. Kinsbourne Green Common, which was designated as Common Land in 1967, is a key feature of the Parish and is well used by walkers, dog walkers and local residents. The character of the Parish is therefore quite distinct from its much larger neighbour, Harpenden Town Council.

Harpenden Rural Parish Council is, within the constraints of its very modest budget, active locally, and there is a clear sense of community evidenced in the response of local residents to become involved in activities such as local litter picks. St Mary's church and the local scout group are also at the centre of the community. With this background in mind, the Parish Council has reviewed the existing Parish boundaries in detail, noting that for the most part they cut across agricultural land. It has concluded that there no anomalies that need correcting and that consequently no changes to its boundaries are required.

Harpenden Rural Parish Council

[22] To fill the democratic gap that exists in many central wards in St Albans, it is appropriate to undertake restructuring.

Combining unparished wards into a Town Council / City Council should be explored as an option. Harpenden Town Council provides a useful comparator.

Some central wards in St Albans have pockets of deprivation relatively higher than in others, for instance Sopwell has a wider cluster of deprivation indicators than say neighbouring Verulam. Consideration should be given to disparity in needs issues. Some targeted funding may be needed to cover this.

Similarly, a major more widely used community asset or leisure facility within a parish can incur significant running costs (and capital costs) and therefore targeted funding from the District under devolved management / financial arrangements may be necessary.

The impact on the overall Council Tax bill (inclusive of the parish / town council precept) of creating an extra tier must be levelled off by achieving compensating savings in the district level budget.

The overall Council Tax collectible should not increase for the cost of local services on a like for like basis.

The changes made to the unparished arrangements should as far as possible be cost-neutral.

Resident of St Albans

[23] The trustees of the Colney Heath Village Hall, a CIO charity number 1182267, respond to the invitation from St Albans City and District Council to express views on existing parish and town council arrangements and what changes we would like to see.

The Colney Heath District ward was altered by the Boundary Commission to include only the rural areas Tyttenhanger, Smallford, Sleafshyde, and Colney Heath village. This will take effect at the election in May 2022. From May 2022 the current boundary of Colney Heath Parish will span two District wards namely the rural area of Colney Heath District ward and part of the urban area of Hill End District ward.

We consider that the Colney Heath Parish boundary should be altered to be coterminous with the boundary of the Colney Heath District ward as this would :

- a. reflect the commonality of community identity and interests of the community living in the rural area, and consequently provide for better equality of representation
 - b. serve the community more effectively and conveniently – a rural Parish Council concerning itself with rural area matters rather than having to consider the different needs and interests of residents in both the urban and the rural areas
 - c. provide clarity of representation by the District Councillor to the District Council.
- Due to the marked differences in the numbers of electors in the rural settlements (within the boundary that is coterminous with the District ward boundary), we would suggest that the Parish is not divided into wards. This would avoid Colney Heath Village being over represented on a rural Parish Council.

Until 1947 the current Parish of Colney Heath was part of St Peters Rural. Consideration should be given to re-naming the parish council for the rural area e.g. “St Albans Rural Community Council”. This might reinforce a new identity for the local council focused on the rural area and foster a sense of unity between the rural settlements within the altered boundary.

Trustees of the Colney Heath Village Hall

[24] I have looked at the electoral roll and see that 1A and 2B Jersey Lane are currently in polling district AHC and therefore in Marshalswick South and unparished. I therefore agree it makes sense for them to be in Marshalswick West and to remain unparished. I assume the remaining properties on Jersey Lane will be in Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm as well as remaining in Sandridge Parish.

However, 1, 2 and 3 Rose Walk are shown as currently being in CCC and Marshalswick North. They are therefore currently in Sandridge Parish as the boundaries have been treated as the same. It would therefore make sense for them to be in Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm (as are the other properties currently in Marshalswick North) and to remain in Sandridge Parish. It would not be realistic to have a parish ward for three properties so this would be the sensible solution i.e. to correct the error in the proposal.

[25] I welcome the Council's Community Governance Review. Something needs to be done for the unparished areas of central St Albans where it is hard for local residents to know how to progress their concerns, especially if they do not happen to have a Residents' Association.

Initially, I had thought that the answer was going to be the Town/City Council route giving the unparished community more say in affairs. I now understand that this will be costly, both monetarily and time-wise and in fact I have yet to be convinced that the community is ready for this kind of commitment.

Better then to turn to the current City Neighbourhoods Committee. Having attended the most recent meeting of this committee, I was deeply concerned at the Committee's lack of focus, some fairly basic knowledge and therefore the impetus to actually achieve anything meaningful. Why, for instance, did Councillors simply not know what Council's expenditure on their allotments was? Why, when asked by a member of a local RA, did the Council officer simply dodge the question of renovation of a public amenity within the Conservation Area? This only goes to show that whilst the current engagement of Council with local RAs is a positive step forwards, it needs to be built upon in order to engender any sense of purpose or trust.

Would it be possible for Council to help the local community by providing a little more structure with which to work? For instance

- a) Costings of the set-up of a City Council
- b) More details of what that would look like
- c) Expectations of local involvement from both sides
- d) As an alternative to this, to set out a better framework for CNC so that the public, perhaps still represented by RAs though encouraging the formation of more, would have a clearer mandate for bringing concerns to Council and even holding Councillors to account.

Even these four points could be a starting point for further discussion about Community Governance. As things are at the moment, it is beginning to look like a box-checking exercise leading nowhere and pleasing nobody because the public doesn't understand what it is being asked. As a committed member of a local Residents' Association for many years, I am perhaps better acquainted with how things work locally than most members of the public and yet it strikes me that this is a highly complex issue with which most of us are ill-equipped to deal. If I find it hard to understand and engage with my insider knowledge, then I fear there is little hope for engagement with the wider public and we could all use some steering from Council.

Resident of Selby Avenue, St Albans

[26] St Michael Parish Council (StMPC, also “we”, “our” etc.) acknowledges the process of the Community Governance Review (CGR) currently being conducted by St Albans City and District Council (SADC).

StMPC recognizes that there is some anomaly in the position of part of the boundary between itself and St Stephen Parish Council, that is the section historically dividing the north and south sides of Ragged Hall Lane. Our understanding from SADC staff is that while the CGR will be examining such situations, there is no predetermined outcome and a change is not inevitable.

With the District Ward changes effective from May 2022, St Michael Parish Council has what we consider to be a complex make up of electoral divisions, as shown in the table appended. Together with numbers 2,4,6 and 8 (which are currently unparished), the even numbered residential properties in Ragged Hall Lane (10-84 plus Westfield’s Farm) form one half of a suburban street scene. In fact, the most densely populated area within StMPC is to be found on the northern side of Ragged Hall Lane. Properties further west along Ragged Hall Lane are very much more rural in character; Cuckman’s Farm and its neighbours come under St Stephen, but nos. 108, 110, Wimbushes, East Farm and East Farm mobile home are in St Michael. The entire stretch is flanked by countryside to the north up to the A414 dual carriageway and thus remote from the wider expanse of StMPC, which covers an almost wholly rural area between eastern Hemel Hempstead and western St Albans, with settlement dispersed across a number of small isolated hamlets, including Appspound, Breakspears, Bushwood, Childwickbury, Gorhambury, Potters Crouch and Pimlico.

We are aware from its February meeting minutes that St Stephen Parish Council will make, or has already made, a request to the CGR that the northern properties in Ragged Hall Lane be moved [from StMPC] into the St Stephen parish area. To the best of our knowledge, no attempt appears to have been made by them to canvass residents’ opinion about this.

In the matter of community identity, although it is not based on factual evidence, anecdotally we know that the odd-numbered properties are in general surprised that their northern neighbours are not in St Stephen, but the even-numbered dwellings know and seem content with the fact they are in St Michael. Recently active WhatsApp group chats indicate that, of those who express an opinion, residents wish to remain in StMPC.

The CGR consultation process ending on 31 March 2022 may or may not conclude that the residents on the StMPC side of Ragged Hall Lane have a stronger community identity with their neighbours on the southern side of the road, in St Stephen/Chiswell Green. If that stronger community identity is NOT expressed, we would suggest that it would be inappropriate for any weight to be given to St Stephen Parish Council’s request to annexe the northern side of Ragged Hall Lane from StMPC.

Aside from the consideration of community identity, StMPC has some concerns for the consequences of altering the boundary line:

1. We believe that all residents in the St Michael parish area will have to pay more council tax as a result, with no effective change in their access to services and amenities. StMPC has advice from SADC that the removal of the N. side properties and electors in Ragged Hall Lane would lead to a reduction in the council tax base of 54 to 233, i.e. approximately 18%.

□ Residents in St Stephen have historically paid more council tax [than those in St Michael] to fund the amenities provided locally. We presume that the 54 “new” properties would be subject to the same higher parish precept as those in the counterpart property bands already in St Stephen. With their own council tax base already at 6,622, an increase of 54 (~0.82%) would seem to be negligible by comparison, and StMPC doubts whether it would lead to any practical reduction in the council tax take per household in St Stephen. (NB, no account taken of any other change in consequence of the CRG).

□ While covering a large geographical area, StMPC is a very small local council, operating on a precept of little more than £5,000 p.a. No community amenities are owned or run, and there is no opportunity for commercial income. If 18% of its tax base is removed, there cannot be a corresponding reduction in StMPC’s running costs, most of which are governance and compliance obligations and the clerk’s salary (for approximately 10 to 12 hours a month). Thus a similar total precept would need to be collected from a much smaller council tax base, leading to an increase in council tax for all of StMPC’s remaining residents.

2. StMPC understands that some residents will object to a transfer from St Michael to St Stephen in the belief that their children’s chances of obtaining school places would be weakened. Advice received from HCC (via SADC) indicates that there is no difference between St Michael and St Stephen as HCC school priority areas. There appears however to be a persistent belief among residents that being in St Michael is an advantage in obtaining a school place. Our brief research into admissions criteria has identified only one example in the St Albans area; our resources do not allow for more detailed investigation. Specifically, the published admissions policy for St Albans Girls’ School lists local towns/parishes in the school’s priority area, and states that “Places will be allocated to each parish/unparished area or town in the priority area in proportion to the number of applications made.” Parents have inferred that being part of a larger parish in the same priority area would dilute the chances of any single place being allocated under rule 6. StMPC is not in a position to say whether this interpretation is true, either in theory or in practice, or whether it is a valid focus for the CGR.

In summary:

□ StMPC considers that while an electoral boundary anomaly in Ragged Hall Lane does exist, a correction of it would in our opinion cost residents more and would not be likely to confer any practical advantages for them. StMPC would therefore rather the CGR retain the current electoral boundary.

□ If residents in households 2, 4, 6 and 8 Ragged Hall Lane consent, the opportunity of being brought into StMPC might be considered.

□ StMPC will of course concede to a redrawn boundary with St Stephen Parish Council, if the CGR's public consultation process determines that community identity, or any other overriding factor, is strong enough to motivate the change. In that event we would suggest that:

□ The present St Michael South East Ward be recommended for transfer into St Stephen, with the altered outer parish boundaries meeting along the eastern edge of Park Wood, i.e. matching the District Ward boundary from May 2022.

□ The rural western end of Ragged Hall Lane, up to its junction with Potterscrouch Lane and Bedmond Lane, be recommended to stay within St Michael Parish Council, i.e. to include, as now, dwellings at Wimbushes and East Farm.

St Michael Parish Council

[27]

Representation by Colney Heath/Boissy-sous-St-Yon/St.Yon Twinning Association (CBTA)

We write with our views on existing parish arrangements and what changes we would like to see.

The CBTA was established in 1982 to promote and foster friendship and understanding between people of Colney Heath and Boissy-sous-St-Yon and St.Yon, France and continues as a long standing local community organisation.

From a survey of our individual members ^[1] the response from our members and our committee is unanimous - namely that the boundary of Colney Heath Parish Council should be altered to match the Colney Heath District ward boundary to form a smaller Parish Council more focused on the needs and interests of residents in the rural area of the existing Parish.

Colney Heath / Boissy-sous-St-Yon / St. Yon Twinning Association

[28] I am a pensioner living in Ragged Hall Lane, Chiswell Green in a Band E property. Like many people on a modest income, I am struggling with much higher food and energy prices and have to watch every penny.

My son, who helps me with my finances, has told me that St Stephen Parish Council has applied to move its Parish boundary so that my property and those of my neighbours, move from St Michael to St Stephen and that this will increase my Council tax by around £75 a year, even after taking into account the single person discount. I would get no benefit at all from paying this extra tax given my age and health.

I have not received any letter from St Stephen Parish Council about their proposal so can only assume that they have found a way to rake in several thousand pounds of extra Council tax a year without anyone noticing. That is shameful. To be

absolutely clear, I do not want to be moved from St Michael to St Stephen Parish and would like any such proposal from St Stephen to be rejected by the District Council. I am sure some of my neighbours will feel the same way when they find out what is being planned.

Resident of Ragged Hall Lane

[29] Marshalswick North Residents Association (MNRA) is a non-political organisation representing St Albans residents living east/north of Marshalswick Lane, west of Jersey Farm and south of Sandridge (i.e. the current Marshalswick North electoral ward).

We are fully aware of the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which will shortly alter the District Council electoral ward arrangements covering our area. (MNRA made representations to the LGBC during the course of the consultation.) Unfortunately, in accommodating the wishes of Jersey Farm residents to be part of the city, the new arrangements slice the Marshalswick estate community in two down the middle, the northerly section being grouped with housing to the west of Marshalswick Lane. This does not reflect how the communities either side of Marshalswick Lane identify themselves on the ground. It also groups residents in a Parish Council area with its own strong identity (Sandridge) with those in an unparished area.

The points we wish to make in relation to the consultation are:

1. Current Sandridge Parish Council boundaries must be retained

We believe that it is imperative that current Sandridge Parish boundaries are retained. The LGBC arrangements do not necessitate re-alignment of Parish Council boundaries. Indeed, they have provided suggested revised parish electoral arrangements (page 32 of their final proposals report Dec 2020). To alter the parish boundaries would simply compound the problem created by the LGBC of cutting the existing community in two. Retention of Sandridge Parish Council will, by contrast, reflect the current strong identity of the large estate of mainly Nash built housing with the much-used Quadrant shopping centre, library and parish council offices as its core cultural and meeting place. Retention of the current parish boundaries will maintain this community cohesion. The arrangements at present are known, effective and convenient.

Sandridge Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan was successfully passed at referendum in May 2021 after many years of intensive work from local residents. It is very much a 'bottom up' generated Plan, reflecting the principles of localism. Residents from the housing both sides of the new electoral ward boundary along Sherwood Avenue, from Jersey Farm, as well as Sandridge village, were all integrally involved. The Neighbourhood Plan is very important to local people as a way of influencing the future direction of their community. We would not want to see anything (i.e. a change in parish boundary) which reduces the legitimacy and force of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Split Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm parish electoral wards

We understand that Sandridge Parish Council made its response to the Community Governance consultation through expression of its view in the Autumn of 2021 and that this has been accepted as a response to this consultation. Its view is that Marshalswick East and Jersey Farm should be two separate parish electoral wards with four parish councillor seats in each. MNRA fully supports this view, which reflects how people identify with their respective communities within the parish.

Marshalswick North Residents Association

[30] I think there's great potential in having a parish council for Batchwood and New Greens (together or separately) It would build on the existing but underdeveloped sense of community manifested in things like the work of Christ Church and Friends of Batchwood. It could provide a focus to bring people together and contribute to improving facilities for local residents. I think there's quite a lot of untapped community energy around and a parish council would make good use of that.

Resident of Batchwood Gardens, St Albans

[31] It has recently been brought to our attention that the Parish Boundary is planned to be moved. Our house is situated in St Michael's Parish and we have been informed that it is planned to move us into St Stephen's Parish.

We would like to make it known that we do not wish the boundaries to be moved, historically most of the North side of Ragged Hall Lane has been in St Michaels, a rural parish, and we see no good reason to move it. We understand that St Stephen's Parish have requested that our boundary be changed and the properties affected moved into their Parish, as we have not been consulted by St Stephen's Parish Council we feel this proposed move should be challenged.

Surely with changes of boundaries householders should be consulted. It is not only an increase in our rates, but if you look at the competition for places at St Albans Girls School and Verulam, St Michael's have less applicants and so people move to St Michael's so their children have a good chance of getting into a good single sex local state school.

Residents of Ragged Hall Lane

[32] I have lived back in Colney Heath Village for 43 years and also attended the village school. My mother was born in the village. Over the last few years the village atmosphere has changed. The Councilors who do not represent Colney Heath ward

the and Clerk have no interest in the village itself and have upset majority of the residents. They are dictators even saying at one Council meeting "Its as though the parishioners are telling us what to do not us telling them" Although the Councilors for Colney Heath ward try to help us and other affected Parishioners, they are bullied and asked whose side are they on. Surely a Parish Council should be trying to do their best for the residents not have sides.

By changing the Parish Boundaries it is the only way we will get our Scout HQ back. A purpose built building built from money raised by Family and Friends of the Group over 45 years ago and fully maintained by the Scouts. Many other organisations used it regularly when it was not being used by the group. The Colney Heath Parish Council stole it by means of not renewing the lease on the land. They claimed it was "theirs" as it had been on the land for over 21 years. They locked us out on 21st December 2019. They claimed it was unsafe and we didn't have liability insurance, all of which was untrue. They have since backed down on that.

Since then North Mymms Scouts accommodated us until Lockdown 2020. We held our meetings outside during the summer 2021 and have met in Colney Heath village hall for the last two terms, but unfortunately there is nowhere there to store our equipment, so the small amount of equipment we have been able to get from the Scout Hut we have to store in our own homes. We will be meeting outside again after Easter.

The Council couldn't care less about what they are depriving these children of. We are unable to offer a full programme whilst we are locked out of our building.

They are talking about knocking it down and rebuilding a new Community Hall with a badminton Court. Unfortunately this would be no good for the Scout Group, as we need our own building to be able to give the children the best. When we take them camping we generally have to dry tents, there would be no facility for that. We need a purpose built building, which is what we had.

We have raised the funds to get the building up and running and it would not cost the Council a penny. It would be an environmental disaster to knock it down and rebuild it apart from the cost to the Parish to rebuild.

We need a Parish that listens to the parishioners and work with them not against them.

Beaver Scout Member and Resident of Colney Heath

[33] This is a personal response but it is based on my experience over 12 years as the volunteer Footpaths Secretary for the Ramblers Association covering the whole of the St Albans city and district.

The Unparished Area

I live in the unparished area of St Albans but have worked with most of the parish councils in the St Albans district and am very impressed by how they work and what they achieve. They can be more responsive to local needs than is possible for the district council in the unparished area. They have the possibility of setting up ad hoc working groups involving local people which can be very effective.

In particular they have been able to quickly and efficiently develop neighbourhood plans which fill gaps in the obsolete district Local plan. They are not subject to the bureaucratic hurdles which stand in the way of creating a new Local Plan.

The unparished areas are at a major disadvantage compared with the parished areas. There is a strong argument for creating a parish council for the unparished area of the city. This "St Albans City Council" could have similar responsibilities to Harpenden Town Council. It could take over the responsibilities currently undertaken by the City Neighbourhoods Committee.

It would also provide a vehicle for an element of local control in the case that St Albans is forced to become part of some larger unitary council.

Parish Boundaries

Existing parish boundaries are based on historical field boundaries and are often unrelated to existing major transport routes which create real physical boundaries between areas. Although I recognise that boundaries with other district and boroughs cannot be changed as part of this current process there are significant opportunities for rationalising boundaries within the district.

In particular I would recommend:

Realigning the boundary between St Albans City and London Colney to lie along the A414.

Realigning the boundary between London Colney and St Stephen parish to lie along the mainline railway and the M25.

Realigning the boundary between St Albans City and St Michael parish to lie along the A414

This would be particularly valuable for London Colney as it would give it a more rational area for its Neighbourhood Plan.

Resident of St Stephens Avenue, St Albans

[34] I am against any move to an alternative parish council for the following reasons:

a) to say that we should move because we have access to the facilities of St Stephens, these facilities are open to people from all over St. Albans but they do not pay. As an over 70 OAP I do not use the sport/play area or allotments.

b) by removing properties from St. Michael Parish they will have less monies to cover costs and thus increase rates to cover for this loss. This will just lead to extra costs for everyone.

c) the historic parishes should be kept, if St Michaels is reduced in size it will become an economic are could result in future it being totally removed.

Resident of Ragged Hall Lane

[35] Redbourn Parish Council have discussed and considered the Community Governance Review and are in agreement that there is not a need for any amendments and therefore, the Parish ward should remain the same.

Redbourn Parish Council

[36] We represent the views expressed by members of 4ColneyHeath residents' association and the unanimous view of the committee of 4ColneyHeath as follows.

We surveyed the 122 of our members who reside in Colney Heath village to collect their views on redrawing the boundaries. Of those members surveyed, 68 members provided responses. The results illustrated motivation to redraw the boundary as it felt this would (1) give a greater sense of identity and interests and (2) better serve the community convenient and effectively.

We have enclosed (1) a copy of the questionnaire and (2) associated notes, (3) the aggregated results, and (4) extracts of members comments from survey which were added in 'free text' fields. Please also see page 2 of this letter for some additional background information.

Consequently, to reflect community identity and interests, and to serve the community effectively and conveniently, the Colney Heath Parish boundary should be altered to match the boundary of the District Council ward for Colney Heath being predominantly the rural area within the current Colney Heath Parish Council boundary. This would result in a smaller Parish Council focused on the rural area which should better represent the residents in the rural settlements of Tyttenhanger, Smallford, Sleafshyde and Colney Heath Village.

4ColneyHeath residents' association

[37] I note that you are considering changes to the local government structure for St Albans and am concerned that the following needs to be addressed:

The inconsistency that the rights of residents in the rural parishes and Harpenden to make decisions about local spending and development are devolved to a very local

level, through their respective parish councils and in the case of Harpenden, their town council.

In contrast, the almost 46,000 voters in St Albans town centre wards do not have any formal local control and are subject to decisions made by District Council officers and councillors who must consider the needs and demands of the District as a whole.

Resident of Trevelyan Place

[38] I am very much in favour of St Albans having a new Town Council to cover all or part of the unparished area.

This would give direct authority (or at least a formal influence) to the residents within the area, at a local level. Under the current District Council disproportionate influence is given to representatives from the surrounding parishes who do not live or work within the city itself.

The city Residents Associations are broadly critical of the level of interaction and consultation on local affairs offered through the City Neighbourhoods Committee, on which they have no voting rights.

Resident of College Street

[39] Abbey Precincts Residents Association is interested in a Town/Parish Council being formed to represent the unparished area of St Albans city, but would like further advice on the advantages and disadvantages. We feel that clarification is necessary on the likely cost implications for residents' Council Tax and how assets and responsibilities would be split with the District Council. It would also be helpful for advice on the steps necessary to establish such a council.

Abbey Precincts Residents Association

[40] I write on behalf of Smallford Residents Association (SRA), to give you feedback on views expressed on parish boundary changes.

The SRA committee sent out the questionnaire attached to all its residents on the email database, followed up by personal contact with residents who are not registered on the database. We have 129 residents on our email list, of whom 83 opened the email contact and 12 clicked through to the questionnaire. Only a handful of questionnaires were received, the low response probably due to the mixture of high involvement with the Brett application to quarry land immediately adjacent to the village, and a difficulty in understanding what a change in parish Boundary would mean to them.

While responses are not statistically valid, all felt strongly about the area/place they lived in and the majority identified with Smallford Village. However, the comments were interesting, which are shown below

'Leaving Smallford, Colney Heath and Tyttenhanger isolated with representation by a single councillor will almost certainly work to the detriment of these communities.'
'Concern that a smaller parish may mean a lesser power role and more limited resources?'

'We will need to get some sort of subsidy from SADC for a smaller parish or we will have to pay a higher precept for services Smallford rarely see''

'Full answer to 3.8 above YES about 2,200 electors but in the case of Colney Heath and other SADC parishes that have a common or a Village Green modern living results in these areas have far more use by the general public from beyond the parish boundaries. I believe that a reduction in the electorate (council tax payers) will place a heavy burden on those remaining in the parish. There should be some balancing payment paid by SADC otherwise it would be unjust and possibly untenable. There will no doubt be other unknowns and unwelcome knock on effects. For all these reasons I would prefer that Smallford link with Sandridge.'

'I hope that the option to join Sandridge is available. I could see some further community advantage if Sleafshyde were to either do the same. Remaining in Colney Heath is not such a good option in my opinion as the highway A414 is a great divide and I think that we all in Smallford have far more connections with Marshalswick/Sandridge'

' 2.1 – 2.8 are important, but I am not optimistic that a boundary change will improve it'

Survey responses were disappointing, but the general feel from knocking on doors that there would be a concern in a changed parish size if it resulted in a higher precept.

It is the SRA committee view that while this consultation did not include parish precept in its terms of reference, Smallford residents would be concerned about the viability of a smaller parish. We therefore request that your report to the Policy Committee in June includes this concern, and the likely need of subsidy to smaller parish expenditure so that Smallford residents are not disadvantaged by a higher precept when little current Parish expenditure is spent on the village.

Smallford Residents Association

[41] I live on the north side of Ragged Hall Lane in Chiswell Green in St Michaels Parish. I would like to get the border moved so that my side of the road becomes part of St Stephens parish. I live in the country road end of RHL past Hawthorn Way, before the Woods. The boundary should be at the Furzebushes Lane junction. It just

makes more sense to move the boundary so that we can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan and feel part of the wider community.

Resident of Ragged Hall Lane

[42] We are writing in response to the proposal to move the whole of Ragged Hall Lane in to St Stephens Parish. We live in Ragged Hall Lane. At present, our address is in St Michaels parish and we OPPOSE any decision to change this, as it would result in higher council tax for us, and it will increase competition for applying to secondary schools that operate on a parish system.

We cannot see any benefit to moving to St Stephens parish for our family, and firmly prefer to stay in St Michaels parish.

Residents of Ragged Hall Lane, St Albans

[43] The following letter was agreed at the Colney Heath WI (CHWI)meeting of Thursday 10th March 2022 in response to the invitation from St. Albans City and District Council to express views on the existing parish and town council arrangements.

The Colney Heath District Ward boundary was changed by the Boundary Commission to include only the rural areas of Tyttenhanger, Smallford, Sleafshyde and Colney Heath village. This change will take effect from the election in May 2022.

It is the belief of the CHWI that the Parish boundary should be changed to match that of the District Ward boundary.

In our view this will;

- better reflect the interests of the rural community
- lead to better community cohesion within the rural parish,

and a smaller Parish Council focused on the rural area will serve that community more efficiently and effectively than the current arrangement.

Colney Heath WI

[44] Conservation 50, whose brief is the conservation of St Albans built environment and its heritage, has the following comments:

1. The unparished areas of St Albans do suffer from a democratic deficit in terms of any executive control over their local affairs.

Although there is an oversight/scrutiny committee, the City Neighbourhood Committee (CNC) only has an advisory role, so unparished areas need to rely on their City and District and Herts County Council ward councillors for an engagement at an executive level.

2. With the executive power being held in the District Council this means that councillors living outside the unparished areas have a say in the policies and decisions affecting those areas – this can be seen as challenging local democratic decision-making.

3. It has been suggested that a 'town council' (city council for St Albans) should be formed. Should there be a proposal to form a city council this would give the unparished areas an opportunity to elect councillors and therefore have a fuller engagement and influence over policies affecting their neighbourhoods, and importantly, this would include the city centre.

4. The extra layer of a city council could be perceived as a disadvantage as it would form another layer of bureaucracy with the administrative and financial burden that would be incurred – resulting in a likely increase in taxes.

5. However, should the proposal of creating unitary authorities within Hertfordshire be revived by the Government then the District Council would be dissolved and it would make sense to establish a city council.

Conservation 50

[45] In regards to the District Community Governance Review (CGR) which is considering whether to create new parish council(s) or make changes to existing parish arrangements. The Colney Heath Scout Group did a survey of all its members and asked them if they wished the Colney Heath Parish to remain as it is or if to change the boundaries to match the district boundaries that come into effect this year.

All the replies we received from the survey are in favour of the change to the parish boundary. Some of the comments we received from the survey:

Colney Heath village tends to get overruled by majority voting from the other areas of the parish, the scout headquarters continues to remain shut after years of attempted negotiations, having affected my children's upbringing and this is led by councilors from outside of the village community with no interest in Colney Heath. Councilor's from outside of the village have continued to make decisions on Colney Heath village without any prior knowledge or understanding of issues, they have

installed bollards in positions that have stopped traditions like the local fair, as well as spending tens of thousands of pounds on unnecessary legal fees. It is my belief that the parish council has grown too large and now has too much power, by changing the boundary councillors would concentrate on the more important community issues.

As the parish stands at the moment, I am disappointed in many of the decisions made. I have lived in the village for most my life and in the last few years, this is the first time I have considered moving away due to lack of community spirit.

I have lived in the village for all of my life and recently this is the first time I have considered moving away. The Scout HQ is a big part of my life and I was around when it was built and helped the many parents that put in a considerable amount of work and time to build the Scout hut. At that time there was a very strong community and it was really good to be part of it. I feel the community spirit has been lost.

I do not feel that the larger parish serves the interests of our family or the community very well. A small village has needs that are not necessarily seen or understood if you do not live within it. If it continues to grow it will be less of a parish and more of a district, requiring more funds, more councillors, and more work. If a parish is allowed to expand too far it loses its own identity and the values on which it should stand, unfortunately I feel this has already happened within ours.

The general sense from the survey was that the community spirit has been lost, largely due to Colney Heath parish growing into parts of St Albans. Our members are 100% in favour of changing the boundaries so that we are a smaller rural parish to then be able to serve the rural community more effectively.

Colney Heath Scout Group

[46] Unless CNC is given more powers and non-voting members are given a vote then it would seem far more sensible if the unparished central part of St Albans City had its own Parish Council for the protection of this specific area.

Resident of Waverley Road

[47] A lot of people in Colney Heath where I live have concerns about the way that our Parish Council has been and is currently being run. At the present time a reorganisation as part of a wider review, would seem a good way to have a 'reset' and get a new version of the parish council working with village organisations rather than against them, and with proper due diligence in place from the start.

Highfield is really part of St Albans and should be merged with the main council. Perhaps Smallford and Tyttenhanger, both separated from Colney Heath by the A414, should have their own body.

Resident of Colney Heath

[48] It seems more sensible for the whole of Ragged Hall Lane to be considered to identify as a single community within Chiswell Green as that is how we identify ourselves. Also we use the various amenities that are local. But I am not sure where I stand at the up coming local election. Your leaflet says from MAY 2023 I would vote for and be represented by a St Stephens Parish Councillor. But I have had a letter from the St Albans Council giving me the information about the change of Polling Station. On the same day I had leaflet for the Liberal Democrats for St Stephens ward. I phoned the council and was told I'm still in the Parish of St Michaels. I then emailed the LD today they are wasting their leaflets (which has often happened previously) only to have a very pleasant reply saying that the whole of RHL also falls now falls within the St Stephens Ward for Local Elections as there has been a boundary change this year changing us from Redbourn Ward to St Stephens Ward. So am I right in assuming I should be voting this year for a St Stephens Councillor? It never made any sense for this part of RHL to voting for councillors of Redbourn Ward and even more ridiculous to vote for MP from Harpenden and Hitchin. It always annoyed me on writing to a Harpenden MP about local problems like the field behind the house and the Rail Distribution Depot suggested at Park St I would be referred to the St Albans MP altho the Rail terminal would affect traffic both rail and road in Harpenden. If I am correct when I moved here in 1971 I think We were represented by Peter Goodhew but I am not sure which area was his. Will the Parishes still remain as these are historic aren't they? My husband and I had to have my daughters! Birth Certificate changed as the Registrar insisted we were in St Stephens Parish and would not wait and check as my husband suggested.

So you can see that there has been various changes to this part of RHL which has not always been to our liking.

Resident of Ragged Hall Lane

[49] Regarding the Community Governance Review:

- Would it be more efficient and economical to combined the Harpenden Rural and Harpenden Town
- With the size of Harpenden and adjoining parishes would it benefit from having its own Town Council?

Resident

[50] A full response from a London Colney resident is attached as an Appendix.
