

**Report Title:** Governance Review – to reduce the number of Town Councillors from 16 to 12

**Meeting Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**Report by:** Jo O'Donoghue (Town Clerk)

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## 1. Introduction

This report outlines the necessary steps and considerations for undertaking a governance review to reduce the number of elected members on a Town Council from 16 to 12. Such a review ensures the council structure remains effective, representative, and aligned with the needs of the local community.

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## 2. Purpose of the Governance Review

The main purpose of the review is to assess whether the current number of councillors (16) remains appropriate given the town's population, governance effectiveness, and representation needs. The objective is to determine whether a reduction to 12 councillors would result in more efficient and streamlined local governance.

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## 3. Legislative Framework

The governance review must comply with:

- **The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007**
- **Guidance issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)**
- **The Local Government Act 1972** (for parish and town councils)

These regulations set out how and when governance reviews can be initiated, the consultation requirements, and the process for implementing changes.

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## 4. Initiating the Review

The process may be initiated in one of the following ways:

- A resolution of the principal authority (district or unitary council)
- A valid community petition (signed by a required percentage of local electors)
- A request from the Town Council to the principal authority

For this review, it is assumed that the Town Council is requesting a review via the principal authority.

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## 5. Key Stages of the Governance Review

### a) Terms of Reference

The principal authority drafts Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review. The ToR should include:

- The purpose and scope of the review
- The rationale for reducing the number of councillors
- Timelines and consultation arrangements

#### **b) Consultation**

Public consultation is a key requirement. This typically includes:

- Consulting local electors
- Seeking views of local community groups, businesses, and stakeholders
- Ensuring a minimum consultation period (usually 6–12 weeks)

Methods may include:

- Online surveys
- Public meetings
- Notices in local media and council buildings

#### **c) Assessment and Analysis**

The principal authority analyses the responses, population data, and electoral equality to determine whether the proposed change is justified.

#### **d) Draft Recommendations**

Based on the evidence, draft recommendations are published. These will:

- Propose reducing the number of councillors from 16 to 12
- Justify the proposal in terms of improved governance and representation

#### **e) Further Consultation**

A second phase of consultation is typically held on the draft recommendations. This allows for public feedback on the specific proposal.

#### **f) Final Recommendations**

Following consultation, final recommendations are prepared and submitted to the full council of the principal authority for approval.

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## **6. Implementation**

If approved, the principal authority will make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to bring the changes into effect. This will:

- Define the new number of councillors (12)
  - Set out transitional arrangements
  - Take effect at the next ordinary election of the Town Council
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## 7. Considerations and Risks

### a) Democratic Representation

A balance must be struck between efficient governance and fair representation. Reducing councillors may increase workloads or affect ward representation.

### b) Public Opinion

Significant opposition during consultation can impact the legitimacy or acceptance of the change.

### c) Legal Challenges

A robust, transparent process helps avoid challenges based on procedural grounds.

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## 8. Timeline (Example)

Stage	Timeframe
Draft Terms of Reference	Month 1
Public Consultation (Stage 1)	Months 2–3
Draft Recommendations	Month 4
Public Consultation (Stage 2)	Month 5
Final Recommendations	Month 6
Decision by Principal Authority	Month 7
Implementation (via Order)	Prior to next election

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## 9. Conclusion

Reducing the number of councillors on a Town Council from 16 to 12 requires a carefully planned and legally compliant governance review process. Through transparent consultation and sound analysis, the review can ensure any changes reflect the needs of the local community while enhancing council effectiveness.

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## 10. Financial Considerations

The cost of the governance review, including all associated public consultations, administrative tasks, and legal work, is the responsibility of the principal authority (district, borough, or unitary council) conducting the review. This includes:

- Preparing and publishing Terms of Reference
- Organising and analysing public consultations
- Drafting and enacting the Reorganisation Order

Frodsham Town Council is not expected to bear the costs of the review, though it may choose to support the process with non-financial resources (such as use of premises or staff input). Local residents are not charged for participating in the review.

It is the duty of the principal authority to fund and facilitate the process as part of its legal obligation to ensure effective community governance.