

# **Briefing Paper: Proposed Name Change from Datchet Parish Council to Datchet Town Council**

**For consideration at meeting: 12 January 2026**

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## **Executive Summary**

**This paper examines the legal framework, advantages, and disadvantages of changing Datchet Parish Council's name to Datchet Town Council. The key finding is that this is a cosmetic change only with no effect on legal powers, duties, or relationship with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.**

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## **1. Legal Framework**

### **1.1 Legislative Basis**

**Under the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007), an ungrouped parish council may pass a resolution giving the parish the status of a town, at which point the council becomes a town council.**

### **1.2 Procedure**

**The change can be implemented through one of two routes:**

#### **Option A: Council Resolution (Simpler)**

- The Parish Council passes a simple resolution to adopt the title "Town Council"**
- No external approval required from the principal authority (the Borough)**
- The change takes effect immediately upon resolution**

#### **Option B: Community Governance Review (More Complex)**

- Requires the principal authority to conduct a formal review**
- Involves public consultation**
- More time-consuming and involves the Borough in the decision-making process**

**Recommendation: Option A is standard practice for this type of change and maintains local decision-making autonomy.**

### **1.3 Legal Effect**

**Critical Point: The change of name is purely a matter of style. According to established case law and guidance, it has no effect whatsoever on:**

- **Legal status or powers available to the council**
  - **Statutory duties or obligations**
  - **The council's corporate identity**
  - **Electoral arrangements**
  - **Precept-setting powers**
  - **Planning consultation rights**
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## **2. Relationship with the Royal Borough**

### **2.1 No Change in Formal Relationship**

**The relationship between Datchet Parish Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead would remain entirely unchanged:**

- **The council remains a statutory local authority under the same legislation**
- **No change to the tier structure (parish/town councils remain the first tier; the unitary authority remains the principal authority)**
- **No additional powers are gained or lost**
- **Consultation arrangements on planning applications remain identical**
- **No change to precept collection arrangements**
- **No impact on delegation of services or devolution of responsibilities**

### **2.2 Perception and Protocol**

**The only potential changes relate to perception rather than substance:**

- **The Chairman could adopt the title "Town Mayor" instead of "Chairman"**

- Some residents might perceive increased status or importance
  - The Borough might adjust its language when referring to the council in correspondence
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### **3. Advantages**

#### **3.1 Recognition of Urban Character**

- Datchet has an urban character that may be better reflected by "Town Council"
- Around 400 parish councils in England use the town council title
- May better represent the community's identity and aspirations

#### **3.2 Enhanced Civic Pride**

- Could boost community identity and civic engagement
- The title "Town Mayor" for the Chairman may enhance the prestige of the office
- May encourage greater public participation in local democracy

#### **3.3 Perception and External Relations**

- May be perceived as having greater standing in discussions with the Borough and other bodies
- Could assist in promoting Datchet externally (e.g., for tourism or business purposes)
- Aligns with how many similar-sized communities describe themselves

#### **3.4 No Financial Cost**

- The change can be implemented at minimal cost
  - New stationery and signage can be updated as existing supplies are depleted
  - Electronic communications can be updated immediately at no cost
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### **4. Disadvantages**

#### **4.1 Confusion and Perception**

- Risk of public misunderstanding that the council has gained new powers or responsibilities
- May create unrealistic expectations about what the council can deliver
- Could cause confusion among residents unfamiliar with local government structures

#### **4.2 Historical and Traditional Considerations**

- Loss of the historic designation "Parish Council" (in place since 1894)
- Some residents may value the traditional rural associations of "parish"
- Potential disconnect from the ecclesiastical parish, though legally they have been separate since the 19th century

#### **4.3 Administrative Matters**

- Need to update all official documents, letterheads, signage, website, and social media
- Potential short-term confusion during transition period
- Minor administrative burden on council staff

#### **4.4 Lack of Substantive Change**

- The change is purely cosmetic and brings no additional powers or resources
- May be seen as prioritising appearances over substantive improvements to services
- Could divert attention from more pressing governance matters

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### **5. Considerations for Public Consultation**

Given that the final decision is deferred until 12 January 2026 to allow public debate, the council should consider:

#### **5.1 Consultation Methods**

- Public meeting or open forum

- **Online survey**
- **Notices in prominent locations and parish magazine**
- **Direct invitation to community groups and stakeholders**

## **5.2 Key Questions for Residents**

- **Do you support the change from "Parish Council" to "Town Council"?**
- **What do you see as the benefits or concerns?**
- **Does "Town Council" better reflect Datchet's character?**
- **Are there any alternative titles you would prefer?**

## **5.3 Transparency**

**The consultation should clearly state:**

- **The change is cosmetic with no effect on powers or precept**
  - **The council's legal status and relationship with the Borough remains unchanged**
  - **The process is reversible if the community later decides otherwise**
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## **6. Recommendations**

**The Council should consider the following approach:**

- 1. Conduct meaningful public consultation between now and January 2026**
- 2. Clearly communicate that this is a change in style only, with no impact on powers or precept**
- 3. Gauge public opinion through multiple channels to ensure broad community input**
- 4. Document the rationale for whatever decision is ultimately made**
- 5. If proceeding, pass a formal resolution at the meeting on 12 January 2026**
- 6. Plan the transition with a clear timeline for updating materials and communications**

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## **7. Conclusion**

**The proposed name change is legally straightforward and requires no involvement from the Royal Borough unless the council chooses the more complex community governance review route. The decision is ultimately about community identity and civic pride rather than substantive changes to governance or powers. The consultation period provides an important opportunity to ensure the decision reflects the community's views and values.**