

## **CGR 23**

### **Parishes Affected**

Sonning Common

### **Matter to be considered**

To increase the number of councilors from 12 to 15

### **Impact on district and county council boundaries**

None

### **Summary of parish council responses**

Sonning Common parish council requested an increase in the number of councillors originally noting that the council has become more active in recent times but that its, “ability to cope with more new ideas is constrained by the number of members”.

When the parish council was informed that the working group was unlikely to support its request it sent a much fuller request stating:

“A. Sonning Common is a key district centre as is indicated by the 8,400 patients registered at its Health Centre. Collectively the population of ‘Greater Sonning Common’ (including Rotherfield Peppard and Kidmore End) was 6,735 at the March 2011 Census. Sonning Common is unusual in having such populous other settlements so close to and dependent on it. We are actually servicing needs arising from well beyond our actual or putative boundary.

B. The parish of Sonning common had 1,595 dwellings in March 2011 but as SODC Planning has determined we are actually a “larger village” settlement that has 1,916 dwellings (including 321 from Rotherfield Peppard) for the purposes of allocating new homes under the Core Strategy. The proposed boundary change will transfer many of those dwellings and more electors to us adding to the work of the council, its committees and its working parties.

C. The number of parish councillors has no bearing on any costs as they are all volunteers and in many cases retired. As we are currently inhibited from doing things we want to do because of a shortage of members then surely it should be up to SCPC to decide how many councillors it actually needs. The public are being denied the opportunity to participate in local democracy and get things done.

D. We are faced with the likely retirement of some experienced and very hard working members in 2015. With more members we may be able to spread the

workload more evenly to help new members to gain experience by gentle rather than total immersion. Also, with some more councillors we can get into and stay in top gear which will be even more necessary when the boundary changes take effect.”

## **Summary of other responses**

None

## **Recommendation**

No change

## **Justification**

The National Association of Local Council guidance is that a council size of 12 is appropriate for a council with an electorate of 4400. Sonning Common’s electorate is only 3100 so it is hard to justify any increase. The working group notes that the parish council’s request appears to be based on an assumption that this council will support its proposal to extend its boundary. The working group does not recommend such support.