

# Council report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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## Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

### Recommendations:

1. to establish a Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee and agree the membership
2. to agree the terms of reference of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee as set out in paragraph two of this report

### Purpose of Report

1. To consider a proposal to establish a Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee.

### Background

2. At its meeting on 17 July Council considered a report on the final recommendations in respect of the community governance review of South Oxfordshire. The report also set out a recommendation from the community governance review working group to establish a standing committee with full delegated powers to finalise any outstanding matters on the review, undertake future community governance reviews and to make decisions on other electoral issues. The proposed terms of reference were as follows:
  1. To make recommendations to Council on reviews of electoral arrangements for the district undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
  2. To undertake parish community governance reviews
  3. To respond to consultations from the Boundary Commission on reviews of parliamentary constituencies and county divisions within the district

4. To undertake reviews of polling districts and polling places
  5. To consider reports from the Returning Officer on district and parish council elections.
3. At the Council meeting in July a number of councillors expressed the view that the working group was not invited by Council to make such a recommendation. Other councillors expressed the view that, if established, the committee should make recommendations to Council on community governance issues. Following the debate Council agreed an amendment to allow further consideration of this recommendation and requested officers to submit a report to a future meeting.

### **Proposed terms of reference**

4. Council is invited to consider the proposed terms of reference. In making the recommendation to establish a committee the working group considered that such a committee comprising councillors with electoral expertise offered an efficient means of progressing matters in detail in a transparent forum. In contrast a less formally constituted working group could be accused of considering matters behind closed doors. Members of the public and councillors would be able to address the committee.
5. A Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee must be politically balanced. A membership of eight would ensure all political groups are represented and comprise five Conservative, one Independent, one Labour and one Liberal Democrat councillors.
6. In considering the proposed terms of reference Council should be aware that in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the council is currently undertaking a review of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area. This review must be completed by 31 January 2015. If Council does not agree to establish a committee with delegated powers in respect of undertaking reviews of polling districts and polling places a special meeting of Council will be necessary prior to the deadline to approve the final proposals.

### **Financial Implications**

7. None arising from this report.

### **Conclusion**

8. At its meeting in July Council deferred consideration of the establishment of a Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee and requested officers bring a report to a future Council meeting. Council is invited to consider the working group's recommendation.

**Background Papers:** Report to Council meeting held on 17 July 2014. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 July 2014.