

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022
.135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, OX14 4SB

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Lynn Lloyd (Chair), Ken Arlett, David Bartholomew, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Mocky Khan and David Turner

Officers: Susan Baker (Electoral Services Team Leader), Paul Bateman (Democratic Services Officer), Steven Corrigan (Democratic Services Manager), Jordan Kennedy (Electoral Services Officer), Ben Silverthorne (Democratic and Electoral Services Trainee)

Remote attendance:

Officer: Chris McMullin (Electoral Services Officer)

1 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies of absence

2 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2022 as a correct record and agree that the chair signs them as such.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interests

4 Urgent business and chair's announcements

There chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was no urgent business.

5 Public participation

Councillor Tim Suter, Chairman of Great Haseley Parish Council made a statement to the committee, which is set out under item 11 below, Thame and Great Haseley
There were no questions from the committee.

6 Community Governance Review

The committee considered the head of legal and democratic's report. This invited the committee to agree a revised timetable for the community governance reviews and to agree draft recommendations for each review.

The committee agreed that to allow officers sufficient time to prepare the consultation documents and to allow for an extended consultation period, the consultation on the draft proposals should run until 29 July 2022. The aim was for the committee to agree final proposals at a meeting to be arranged in early September 2022. The committee was content with this revised timetable.

The committee then proceeded to receive an overview of the community governance review process to date. The committee recalled that at its meeting on 28 February 2022, terms of reference had been agreed for a community governance review in response to matters submitted by parish councils.

An initial engagement period ran from 31 March to 29 April 2022 on the proposed changes. A summary of the engagement responses for each proposal was now presented to the committee for consideration. The summaries contained recommendations for each review. The justification for each recommendation was based on the assessment criteria contained within the terms of reference and informed by the engagement responses. However, one of the assessment criteria was to take into account "views expressed in relation to any changes, particularly from those people directly affected". This meant that review proposals should only be evaluated once the council had consulted on its draft proposals.

In response to a question, the committee noted that, if any proposed changes resulted in parish boundaries no longer being aligned with district ward or county division boundaries, the council could request that the Local Government and Boundary Commission for England make consequential amendments to these boundaries to align with the new parish boundaries.

The committee agreed to consider each review summary in turn (see minutes 8 to 13 below).

RESOLVED: to agree the revised timetable for the community governance reviews so that the consultation on the draft proposals will run until 29 July 2022, with the committee agreeing final proposals at a meeting to be arranged in early September 2022.

7 Community Governance Review - Cuddesdon and Denton

The committee considered a proposal to de-ward Cuddesdon and Denton Parish Council. The committee agreed that the parish council's proposal should be the subject of public consultation.

RESOLVED: to consult on a proposal to de-ward Cuddesdon and Denton Parish Council.

8 Community Governance Review - Henley and Bix

The committee considered a proposal to amend the parish boundary between the parishes of Bix and Assendon and Henley - on - Thames. The proposal in the report was to transfer

properties within Swiss Farm Park Homes currently in Bix and Assendon to Henley-on-Thames parish. The justification was that this would bring about better neighbourhood cohesion, as well as improved representation.

Councillor Ken Arlett, a Henley-on-Thames Town Councillor, did not take part in the voting on this review proposal. He addressed the committee in support of Henley-on-Thames Town Council's view that the boundary should be moved to include the whole of the Swiss Farm Touring and Camping site, contrary to the officer's recommendation which proposes a transfer limited to Swiss Farm Park Homes. He reported that Henley-on-Thames Town Council considered that it would be common sense if all the boundary of Swiss Farm were to be within the parish of Henley-on-Thames. Councillor Arlett also stated that the report did not mention that there were a number of properties which had not been considered, such as two dwellings that had been left in the Bix and Assendon parish (as seen on page 23 of the agenda pack). He stated that it did not make sense to leave these places out of the proposed change, as it would still leave the area in two different parishes.

In response to a question regarding whether any change to the boundary would impact the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for the parish of Bix, officers responded that consideration of CIL or Section 106 monies were not relevant considerations in respect of a community governance review.

The committee agreed to consult on the transfer of a wider area covering the whole of the Swiss Farm Touring and Camping site.

RESOLVED: to consult on a proposal to transfer Swiss Farm Touring and Camping site from Bix and Assendon parish to Henley-on-Thames parish.

9 Community Governance Review - Sonning Common

The committee considered a proposal from Sonning Common Parish Council to increase the number of parish councillors from 12 to 15.

A statement from Councillor Leigh Rawlins, a local ward councillor, in support of Sonning Common Parish Council's request, was circulated to all committee members prior to the meeting.

In addition to the arguments opposing the increase set out in the report schedule, officers reported that two of the parish council seats had been vacant since February 2022 which did not suggest an interest from people to stand as a parish councillor.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that the population figures provided in the report related to electorate figures.

The committee agreed to consult on a proposal not to increase the size of the parish council for the reasons set out in the report schedule and noted that Sonning Common Parish Council now had the opportunity to provide evidence in support of their request.

RESOLVED: to consult on a proposal not to increase the number of parish councillors for Sonning Common Parish Council.

10 Community Governance Review - Thame and Great Haseley

Councillor Tim Suter, Chairman of Great Haseley Parish Council spoke to the Committee regarding the proposals for Thame and Great Haseley. The full text of his statement was as follows;

“Thank you chair I don’t think I’ll need three minutes, because I think that our position has been very well reflected in both I think the papers that are before you this evening and in the analysis that goes around them.

I just wish to make it clear that whilst we entirely understand that as a parish council, that for the neighbourhood planning purposes it would be understandable and possibly desirable for Thame to be able to include some part of Great Haseley Parish within its own neighbourhood planning process, that is indeed something we discussed and agreed as a council and were drawing up the necessary plans to make this work.

Unfortunately, time was against us, and Thame needed to start their neighbourhood planning renewable process before we could conclude that agreement. So, we have always been sympathetic to that, but we are not sympathetic to a complete redrawing of the boundaries of the parish for the reasons given in my submission and I won’t repeat that because you’ve had a chance to read it and you’ll have a chance to discuss it when you come to your own deliberations. But I’m grateful for the opportunity to appear before you this evening to emphasize that whilst we that whilst we wish to be very helpful to Thame for their neighbourhood planning process, we completely understand that. We have strong reasons for wishing to keep the integrity of our parish boundary as it currently is. Thank you chair that is all I want to say.”

The committee considered a proposal from Thame Town Council to amend the boundary of Thame parish to include land currently in Great Haseley parish. Officers recommended that the boundary should not be changed as there was no reasonable argument for this change, as both sites had been identified as not involving residents, and consequently it was considered that there would be no impact on the identity and interests of the local community, or upon effective and convenient representation.

The recommendation, to consult on no change, was supported by the committee.

RESOLVED: to consult on a proposal to make no change to the parish boundary between Thame and Great Haseley.

11 Community Governance Review - Thame

The committee considered a proposal from Thame Town Council to alter the line between the North and South Wards of Thame (as depicted on page 47 appendix A and page 49).

The Committee considered that the proposal would provide an improved electorate balance between the town wards.

RESOLVED: to consult on revised warding arrangements for Thame Town Council.

12 Community Governance Review - Wallingford and Brightwell cum Sotwell

The Committee noted that the proposal from Wallingford Town Council to incorporate land at Site A, currently within the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell parish, into Wallingford parish, had been withdrawn. In addition, the engagement process had provided overwhelming opposition to the proposal.

The committee concurred with the officer's report to cease consideration of this matter and delete it from the terms of reference.

RESOLVED: to cease consideration of the Wallingford Town Council proposal regarding Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and delete it from the terms of reference.

13 Community Governance Review - Didcot

Councillor Mocky Khan, a Didcot Town Councillor, did not take part in the voting on this review proposal but did address the committee.

The committee considered a proposal to consult on revised ward sizes for Didcot Town Council to better reflect the number of electors in each ward, in accordance with the elector councillor ratio (as seen on page 90 for the agenda pack). The recommendation was to consult on a proposal that each of the existing parish wards was represented by the following councillor numbers:

- All Saints- 5 Councillors
- Ladygrove- 6 Councillors
- Millbrook- 1 Councillor
- Northbourne- 3 Councillors
- Orchard- 1 Councillor
- Park- 5 Councillors

The committee discussed the possibility of transferring the Harwell area of Great Western Park (within Vale of White Horse District Council) into Didcot parish, (highlighted in the comments on page 92, comment 4 and 13 and 15), indicating a division within the community at the present time. Officers advised that was not possible for the committee or council to establish a parish that was bisected by a district council boundary. The only way of bringing Great Western Park into one parish was to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake a Principal Area Boundary Review between South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of the White Horse District Council. Council would need to agree to make a request for such a review which could be by means of a Council motion.

The committee noted that the proposal set out in the report still resulted in electoral imbalance, with the Orchard ward councillor representing only 467 electors, well below the average, and the Millbrook ward councillor representing 1637 electors, above the average. Members discussed the options of merging some wards to better address elector to councillor representation. The committee suggested that officers investigate options for merging wards to achieve a fairer distribution of electors to councillors.

Following discussion, the committee agreed to consult on the proposal set out in the report schedule but hoped that further options would come forward as part of the next stage consultation, particularly from Didcot Town Council.

RESOLVED: to consult on the proposal that each of the existing parish wards be represented by the following councillor numbers:

- All Saints- 5 Councillors
- Ladygrove- 6 Councillors
- Millbrook- 1 Councillor
- Northbourne- 3 Councillors
- Orchard- 1 Councillor
- Park- 5 Councillors

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

Date