

Agenda



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Contact Officer: Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager

Tel: 07717 274704

E-mail: steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk

Date: 30 September 2022

A MEETING OF THE

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY 10 OCTOBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, ABBEY HOUSE, ABBEY CLOSE, ABINGDON, OX14 3JE

Members of the Committee:

Lynn Lloyd (Chair)

Ken Arlett

David Bartholomew

Maggie Filipova-Rivers

Mocky Khan

David Turner

Substitutes

Anna Badcock

Pieter-Paul Barker

Sue Cooper

Stefan Gawrysiak

Lorraine Hillier

Kellie Hinton

George Levy

Axel Macdonald

Ian Snowdon

Celia Wilson

You can watch this meeting via the council's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SouthandValeCommitteeMeetings>

An application to speak must be made in writing or by email to democratic services democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk by 5.00 pm on Friday 7 October 2022.

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1 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence and the attendance of substitute members.

2 Minutes (Pages 6 - 11)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022.

3 Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4 Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

5 Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

6 Community Governance Review - final recommendations (Pages 12 - 14)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic and agree final recommendations on a number of community governance review matters – attached.

7 Community Governance Review - Cuddesdon and Denton (Pages 15 - 17)

8 Community Governance Review - Henley and Bix and Assendon (Pages 18 - 21)

9 Community Governance Review - Sonning Common (Page 22)

10 Community Governance Review - Thame and Great Haseley (Pages 23 - 33)

11 Community Governance Review - Thame (Pages 34 - 39)

12 Community Governance Review - Didcot (Pages 40 - 49)

13 The timing of future community governance

The [Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007](#) provides for principal councils to conduct a community governance review (CGR) at any time.

The relevant [guidance](#), issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the Department for Communities and Local Government, suggests that principal councils will want to keep their community governance arrangements under review. The guidance goes on to offer the following advice on what might trigger a CGR:

- it can be helpful to undertake community governance reviews in circumstances such as where there have been changes in population, or in reaction to specific or new local issues
- communities may expand with new housing developments over time. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across the boundaries resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours. In such circumstances, the council should consider undertaking a community governance review
- councils should exercise their discretion, but it is good practice to consider conducting a review every 10-15 years

There is also provision for a community governance review to be triggered by a petition for the whole or part of the council's area, but this is subject to rules around previous CGR's carried out by the principal council.

In 2017 this committee agreed to undertake a community governance review every four years after the scheduled parish council elections, with any agreed changes implemented in time for the next scheduled elections.

Officers experience since 2017 has been that undertaking reviews every four years is a very resource intensive for the elections team and other service teams which support the reviews. Furthermore, undertaking a review every four years, generally invites parish councils to consider and submit speculative requests often on a repeat basis. A number of the matters considered generate little interest from the public.

The guidance states that principal councils should consider the benefits of undertaking a review of the whole of its area in one go, rather than carrying out small scale reviews in a piecemeal fashion of smaller areas, recognising that occasionally specific reviews, for example to adjust minor parish boundary anomalies, may be appropriate. Committing to undertake a review every four years is contrary to the above guidance, is unnecessary, and as can be seen from the most recent review, causes tension between parish councils.

Officers firmly recommend that the council relies on the statutory guidance provided on the timing of a community governance review, including the provision for a district wide review every 10-15 years. The committee will know that it is perfectly acceptable and possible for specific reviews to be carried out to address anomalies.

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorises the democratic services manager to carry out future reviews at timescales provided for in the government guidance in consultation with the chair of the committee.

14 Great Western Park - proposed boundary review

The purpose of this item is to set out the process required for a review of the district council boundaries and provide further clarification that it is not a matter for a community governance review.

As members will be aware from the current CGR_ G review, Didcot Town Council resolved, at its meeting on 7 March 2022, that:

“The whole of Great Western Park to be within the Didcot boundaries and under the remit of Didcot Town Council”.

At its meeting held on 27 June 2022 ([minute 38](#)) Didcot Town Council resolved the following:

“Didcot Town Council wants to resolve the boundary issues regarding Great Western Park. Didcot Town Council resolved that the Leader writes to inform the Boundary Commission and other relevant stakeholders to review and finalise the boundary so that Great Western Park resides under one District Council”.

The issue was also raised at South Oxfordshire District Council’s meeting on 14 July 2022.

As previously explained at meetings of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee and as part of this agenda (CGR_G), parishes must fall within the boundaries of a single principal council area. Therefore, it is not possible to include the area of Great Western Park in Vale of White Horse District Council within Didcot parish. To achieve such an outcome, it would be necessary to alter the district council boundary. Such a review can only be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England via a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR).

The types of PABR are outlined in the guidance available at: [https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lqbce/Corporate%20Documents/Guidance/PABR%20Guidance%20and%20Letter%20Combined%20\(002\)_Redacted.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lqbce/Corporate%20Documents/Guidance/PABR%20Guidance%20and%20Letter%20Combined%20(002)_Redacted.pdf)

As you will see from pages 12 and 13 of the guidance such a review is likely to fall within the medium or large-scale review “type” – more likely large-scale. The guidance makes clear that a request to review the boundaries of principal area must be submitted by all the principal councils concerned – in this case, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. The request would need to demonstrate the benefits of the proposed change, set out the financial implications and evidence of the support of the local community. Any change to the principal area boundaries would still require a further review of parish council arrangements by the relevant district council.

RECOMMENDATION: to note the above process for the review of principal area boundaries.

Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic

