

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic

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To: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

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Community Governance Review – review of the boundary between Harpsden parish and Henley-on-Thames parish

Recommendation:

To agree to consult on draft proposals to:

- a) amend the boundary between Harpsden parish and Henley-on-Thames parish south of Greys Road as shown on the map attached to this report;
- b) include this area in the North Ward of Henley-on-Thames Town Council.

Purpose of Report

1. To invite the committee to agree draft proposals for consultation in respect of the review of the boundary between Harpsden parish and Henley-on-Thames parish south of Greys Road currently in Harpsden parish to Henley parish.

Strategic Objectives

2. Community governance reviews contribute to the council's strategic objective of building thriving communities.

Background

3. At its meeting on 30 October 2017 this committee agreed to undertake a review of the boundary between Harpsden parish and Henley-on-Thames parish to transfer land south of Greys Road currently in Harpsden parish to Henley parish in response to a request from Henley-on-Thames Town Council.
4. In agreeing to undertake the review the committee had regard to the following resolution agreed by Council at its meeting in July 2014
 - that a significant development proposal that sits adjacent to or straddles a parish boundary should automatically trigger a community governance review, such a review to take place on the inclusion of a site in a document that forms part of the approved Local Plan or when planning permission has been granted for the development of the site.
5. The terms of reference for the review were published in March.

Consultation

6. Officers wrote to Harpsden and Henley-on-Thames parish councils and all properties within the affected area on the map attached to this report advising them of the review and inviting comments.
7. Henley-on-Thames Town Council, at its Planning Committee meeting on 3 April 2018, supported the proposed boundary change.
8. Harpsden Parish Council, at its meeting on 19 March 2018 “agreed that the development at Highlands Farm, now called Highlands Park, fitted in better with Henley and that Harpsden would not object to the boundary move, as long as the land closer to Harpsden valley was not under threat”.
9. No comments have been received from members of the public although one did seek clarification of the impact on postal addresses, school catchment areas, highways issues and the likelihood of further development.
10. The council has undertaken the first stage consultation and received no alternative views. Harpsden Parish Council, Henley-on-Thames Town Council and affected members of the public will be consulted on any draft proposals agreed by the committee.
11. If the committee agrees to consult on draft proposals officers will consult Oxfordshire County Council due to the potential impact on the county division boundary – see paragraph 17 of this report.

Consideration of proposal

12. As set out in the report to this committee on 30 October the development at Highlands Farm, for residential led mixed use development for around 170 dwellings, has commenced following the grant of reserved matters in May 2017.
13. As can be seen from the map, attached to the report, the development at Highlands Farm is not immediately adjacent to the boundary between Harpsden

and Henley parishes and is accessed via Highlands Lane from Greys Road. Whilst the current boundary along Greys Road provides a good man-made structure for the boundary between the parishes the proposed boundary would be along existing field lines and tracks to provide a clearly defined boundary in accordance with the assessment criterion that boundaries be aligned with defining natural or structural features.

14. Officers consider that the identities and interests of the residents will be more closely aligned with the town of Henley than the small rural parish of Harpsden. The development better reflects the more built up nature of Henley in contrast to the rural nature of Harpsden. Effective and convenient representation of local residents will also be better served by them residing in Henley parish containing all the local facilities that they will use.
15. The map shows that the area suggested for transfer extends beyond the boundary of Highlands Farm. Officers consider that the suggested boundary provides a logical boundary avoiding the potential isolation of Highlands Farm as an outpost of Henley parish surrounded by Harpsden parish and ensuring there is a continuous boundary between Highlands Farm and Gillott's School.
16. As set out in paragraphs 6-9 there have been no negative comments on the proposal to amend the boundary. As such officers consider that a further stage of consultation should be undertaken on a draft proposal to move the area of land into Henley parish within the existing North ward of Henley-on-Thames Town Council.
17. There are currently approximately 25 electors who would transfer from Harpsden parish to Henley parish. This reduction in electors would not impact the viability of Harpsden Parish Council.

Impact on district and county council boundaries

18. This proposal would affect Henley-on-Thames and Sonning Common district wards and county divisions. If the committee agrees to alter the boundary of the parish the council will request the LG BCE to make related alteration orders to change county division and district ward boundaries to ensure these are coterminous with any change to the parish boundary.

Financial Implications

19. Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, local authorities have responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews. The process is prescribed and involves officer time and other associated costs, such as postage and printing. These costs will be met from within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

20. The Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee has delegated authority to deal with all matters relating to parish community governance reviews.
21. All community governance reviews are undertaken in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the joint guidance on community governance reviews published by

the Communities and Local Government Department and Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) in 2010.

22. The council will implement any changes by making a reorganisation of community governance order.

Risks

23. There is a risk that someone could challenge the outcome of a particular review item through judicial review. Council officers will mitigate against this by ensuring that at all times the council follows the requirements laid down in the 2007 Act and guidance.

Conclusion

24. Henley-on-Thames Town Council has requested a review of the parish boundary in relation to Highlands Farm and the surrounding area situated off Greys Road and currently in the parish of Harpsden. The council received no alternative views during the first stage consultation process and the committee is therefore recommended to agree draft proposals for consultation to transfer the area of land shown on the attached map from Harpsden parish to Henley parish and to include this area of land within the North ward of Henley-on-Thames Town Council.

Background Papers

Report (agenda item 8) to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 30 October 2017.