

CGR_A

Parishes Affected

Grove

Matter to be considered

Creating a single parish

Impact on district and county council boundaries

Grove North and Wantage and Grove Brook District Wards

Summary of parish council responses

This is a request from Grove parish council:

“That Grove parish is de-warded but retain its 16 Parish Councillors – All parish Councillors serve all of the parish, currently there is no distinction between the two wards of Grove Brook and Grove North Ward”.

Summary of other responses

These are set out in the engagement summary document.

Recommendation

To consult on a proposal to deward Grove Parish Council.

Justification

Prior to May 2015 Grove was unwarded with 16 parish councillors elected to serve the whole parish. The Local Government Boundary Commission's (LGBC) review of district electoral arrangements, and the resulting Vale of White Horse (Electoral Changes) Order 2014, had the consequential effect of creating three parish wards - Crab Hill (returning one parish councillor), Grove Brook (five) and Grove North (11). As part of an electoral review, the LGBC are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward.

As part of the 2013/14 community governance review Grove Parish Council requested the removal of the warding arrangements and the creation of a single ward. As part of its draft proposals Council agreed the request and proceeded to consult on the proposal. However, as the arrangements were

created by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) within the previous five years as part of its district electoral review and, as such, protected electoral arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, consent for the proposed change was required from the LGBCE. This was not granted and therefore Council did not proceed with the proposal at that time.

As part of the 2016/17 Community Governance Review, this committee agreed to amend the parish boundary of Wantage parish to include land at Crab Hill within both Grove and Lockinge parishes. As part of that decision the Crab Hill ward of Grove Parish Council ceased to exist with the parish council comprising Grove Brook with five councillors and Grove North with 11 councillors. As the electoral arrangements were protected, for the reasons set out above, consent was requested and granted from the LGBCE for this change.

As set out above, the warding arrangements at parish level were introduced as a consequential effect of the district ward arrangements implemented by the LGBCE in 2015. Following the decision to change the parish boundary with Wantage parish, Grove has consisted of two wards since 2019.

Grove is a largely homogenous settlement that does not readily lend itself to sub-division. The parish electoral arrangements in existence prior to 2015 appeared to serve the identities and interests of the village well, and therefore officers recommend that the council consult on the removal of the warding arrangements for Grove.