

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic

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DATE: 4 August 2022

Community Governance Review Harwell East Proposals

Recommendation(s): that subject to consultation

1. the new name of the council be Harwell East Parish Council;
2. the effective date for the new council will be 1 April 2023, with elections for the new council to take place in May 2023;
3. the council should return eight parish councillors;
4. the council should not be warded.

Purpose of Report

1. To agree proposals for the governance arrangements for Harwell East parish for consultation.

Corporate Objectives

2. Community governance reviews contribute to the council's corporate objectives of working in partnership and working in an open and inclusive way.

Background

3. At its meeting on 16 July 2014 Council agreed the following:

To create a new parish of Harwell East comprising that part of Harwell parish that lies to the east of the A34, with the exception of land lying to the north of the London-

Bristol railway line, the timing of the creation of the new parish to be a matter for the Community Governance Review Committee to determine.

4. This committee agreed, at its meeting on 23 October 2017, to progress the matter for implementation at the May 2019 elections. However, at its meeting on 21 June 2018, the committee considered the matter further and agreed to defer the creation of the new parish until the district-wide review of parish governance arrangements following the May 2019 elections to allow for the community to grow and establish an identity and allow for further details regarding any unitary proposals for Oxfordshire discussed at that time. A map of the new parish is attached.
5. Having previously agreed to establish a new parish the next stage in the process is to agree the electoral arrangements namely:
 - Whether the new parish should have a parish council or an alternative status or style of council (community, neighbourhood or village).
 - The ordinary year of elections.
 - The council size (number of councillors).
 - Whether the parish should be divided into wards.

Style of governance/name of council

6. The name of a parish refers to the geographical name of the area concerned. As the new parish has an electorate of over 1,000 electors a council must be created. As to the name of a council, legislation offers a choice of alternative styles for a parish: parish council, community council, neighbourhood council or village council. Officers propose that the new parish has a parish council and be named Harwell East Parish Council.

Ordinary year of election

7. There is a statutory requirement for ordinary elections of the whole council to take place every four years, which must be coterminous with the election of district councillors for that area. With elections scheduled for May 2023 officers propose that councillors are elected to the new council in May 2023.

Council size

8. As part of the community governance the committee is required to consider the number of councillors for the new parish council.
9. In terms of council size there are no statutory guidelines on the number of councillors elected apart from a minimum of five. There is a wide variation of council size between parish councils which appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England found that that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between five and eight councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had six to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had nine to 16 councillors. Most parish councils with a population of between 10,001 and 20,000 had between 13 and 27 councillors, while almost all councils representing a population of over 20,000 had between 13 and 31 councillors. This broadly reflects the council size

range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126 (see table below) which suggests that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be seven and the maximum 25.

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	45,000	25
9,000	16		

10. The current electorate for the area of Harwell East is approximately 1400. Officers therefore propose a council size of eight councillors.

Parish warding

11. In respect of the question of warding the parish, the committee must consider the following when deciding to recommend that a parish should, or should not, be divided into wards for the purposes of electing councillors:

- Whether the number, or distribution, of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient;
- whether it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the council. For example, this could be the case where in rural areas a parish covers a number of villages and communities.

12. Officers do not consider that the number and distribution of local government electors would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient for a single ward or that the area includes different areas that should be separately represented.

Financial Implications

13. 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 consultation, postage and printing. These costs will be met from within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

14. The Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee has delegated authority to deal with all matters relating to parish community governance reviews.

15. In carrying out a community governance review the council must follow the requirements laid down in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It must also pay heed to the joint guidance on community governance reviews published by the Communities and Local Government Department and LGBC.
16. The council will implement any changes by making a reorganisation of community governance order.

Climate and Ecological Emergencies Implications

17. There are no implications arising from this report.

Risks and Options

18. 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

19. In 2014 Council agreed to establish a new parish of Harwell East. Council is now invited to proceed with the creation of the parish and agree proposals for the governance arrangements for consultation.

Background Papers: None