

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



held on Thursday, 21 June 2018 at 7.00 pm
in the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, Abingdon,
Oxfordshire, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Yvonne Constance (Chairman), Charlotte Dickson,
Gervase Duffield, Ben Mabbett, Helen Pighills and Janet Shelley.

Officers: Susan Baker, Steven Corrigan, Matthew Gaskin and Margaret Reed

Also present: Councillors Vicky Jenkins and Robert Hall.

Number of members of the public: 5

27. Apologies for absence

None.

28. Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2017 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

29. Declarations of interest

The officer reminded the committee that members who were also parish or town councillors should not vote on matters affecting their parish or town council, particularly on matters relating to resources.

Councillor Helen Pighills made a statement that as a member of Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council she would not vote on issues relating to agenda item 8.

30. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

31. Public participation

Great Faringdon Parish Council and Great Coxwell Parish Council had registered to speak and had sent representatives.

James Greenman, Chairman of Sunningwell Parish Council, had not registered to speak but with the Chairman's consent spoke in relation to agenda item 8.

32. Community Governance Review - Great Faringdon and Great Coxwell

The committee considered a report which invited it to agree a draft proposal for consultation in respect of the review of the boundary between Great Coxwell and Great Faringdon parishes to move land south of Faringdon from Great Coxwell parish into Great Faringdon parish.

Written representations regarding this review had been received from Councillor Roger Cox, a local ward councillor, and Councillor Emily Smith since the publication of the agenda and were circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Cox supports the transfer of the wider area shown in appendix two to the report which incorporates the second phase of The Steeds (known as Fernhill Gardens) development (P18/V0259/O). In contrast Councillor Smith urged the committee not to proceed with a community governance review prior to the May 2019 elections, until further information becomes available on the review of Oxfordshire County Council Divisions, due to commence in 2019/20, and clarity is received on the timing of any unitary proposals for Oxfordshire, both of which could impact on the review. She also expressed the view that any consultation should not be undertaken before the new homes are built and occupied to allow residents to have their say in a consultation.

Jacqui Russell, of Great Coxwell Parish Council, addressed the committee and made the following points:

- The parish council support the idea to include the newly built houses in Great Faringdon parish.
- There is a risk that Great Coxwell Parish Council would have to administer the 125 houses included in the outline planning application (P18/V0259/O) if the boundary was not moved.
- Whilst the parish council did not support the inclusion of the wider area prior to any planning approval it acknowledged that if the planning application is granted, waiting until after the May 2019 elections would have adverse effects on the parish council.

Michael Wise, of Faringdon Town Council, addressed the committee. The parish council supported the transfer of the land shown in the map attached at appendix two to the report. He made the following points:

- The planning application in question would lead to an increase in the number of houses along the A420 bypass.
- The houses are being marketed as being part of Faringdon but would be in Great Coxwell under current arrangements.
- Faringdon would be the key amenity provider for these properties.

Officers advised the committee that changes could be made between elections, but this would be costly for the relevant parishes as all councillors would have to resign and new elections held.

Officers advised the committee that a deferral until the outcome of the outstanding planning application on the site would not provide sufficient time to undertake a review and implement any changes before the May 2019 elections.

The committee debated the item and agreed to extend the area of the proposal to include the area of land subject to planning application P18/V0259/O because it is included as a strategic site within the Local Plan and the identities and interests of future residents would be more closely aligned with Faringdon than the small parish of Great Coxwell.

RESOLVED: To consult on a draft proposal to amend the boundary between Great Coxwell and Great Faringdon parishes to move land south of Faringdon from Great Coxwell parish into Great Faringdon parish as shown on the map attached to these minutes.

33. Community Governance Review - Harwell East

The committee considered a report on the timing of the creation of the Harwell East parish and the possible commencement of a community governance review of the electoral arrangements for the parish.

Written representations regarding this agenda item were received from Councillor Reg Waite, a local ward councillor, and Councillor Emily Smith since the publication of the agenda and circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Waite requested the deferral of the creation of the new parish of Harwell East. He expressed the view that the new parish council would encounter difficulties in the recruitment of parish councillors from the newly established community which, despite extensive publicity, had only contributed one parish councillor to Harwell Parish Council. He suggested that a deferral would allow for the community to grow and establish an identity with the completion of the approved housing developments.

Councillor Smith urged the committee not to create the new parish, or undertake a community governance review prior to the May 2019 elections, until further information becomes available on the review of Oxfordshire County Council Divisions, due to commence in 2019/20, and clarity is received on the timing of any unitary proposals for Oxfordshire, both of which could impact on the review.

The committee debated the item and noted that approximately 250 houses are being proposed every year by developers in this area. A delay in the creation of the new parish would allow for a wider consultation of new residents. The committee noted that any agreed changes to create a parish council could be implemented prior to the scheduled elections in 2023. It was therefore agreed to delay the creation of Harwell East parish until a district-wide review of parish governance arrangements is carried out after the May 2019 elections.

RESOLVED: To delay the creation of the new parish of Harwell East until the district-wide review of parish governance arrangements is carried out following the May 2019 elections.

34. Community Governance Review - Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes

The committee noted and received a verbal update from officers on the Community Governance Review of Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Vale of White Horse District Council – Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee minutes

Sunningwell parishes and noted the terms of reference and relevant map circulated with the consultation letters.

Written representations regarding this agenda item were received from Councillors Debby Hallett, Sandy Lovatt and Emily Smith, local ward councillors. Councillor Lovatt supported the review and suggested a minor amendment to the map to provide for the land bounded to the north by the A34 and to the east by the Oxford Road is transferred to Abingdon. Both councillors Hallett and Smith urged the postponement of the review until after the May 2019 elections. The representations will be included in full in the report to the committee at its next meeting on 26 July.

James Greenman, Chair of Sunningwell Parish Council, addressed the committee. His points included the following:

- The natural boundary between Abingdon and Sunningwell is the A34.
- The residents in the affected area will still use Sunningwell amenities.
- The review of the boundary should not be undertaken until after the May 2019 elections when properties become occupied.

The officers informed the committee that consultation results from affected residents would be ready for the next committee meeting on 26 July at which any draft proposals would be agreed for consultation.

RESOLVED: To note a verbal update from officers on the Community Governance Review of Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes and noted the terms of reference and relevant map circulated with the consultation letters.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm