

CGR G

Parishes Affected

South Hinksey

Matter to be considered

To increase the number of councilors – currently five.

To review the warding arrangements.

Impact on district and county council boundaries

None

Summary of parish council responses

The parish council requested the review of both the size of the parish council and warding arrangements.

The parish council also submitted the following during the consultation:

The great majority of residents of the parish of South Hinksey may be said to live in one of two concentrations:

- *The village of South Hinksey, which lies between the A34 and the railway connecting Oxford with Didcot;*
- *The Hinksey Hill area, consisting of the road named Hinksey Hill and several side streets.*

In reality there is not much difference between the number of residents in the two areas. Their character is, however, very different as the Council explained in its letter requesting the review. The members of South Hinksey Parish Council have for some time been exercised with the aim of making the Council truly representative of the whole parish. In 2016, for example, when discussing how best to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, the Council finally decided the most effective way to involve the greatest number of residents in the celebrations would be to organise not one but two events on different days of the same weekend: one in the village and one on the hill. Both were very successful and well supported.

There have been past periods when all the members of the Council have come from the village or when only one of the five members has come from the hill. The present situation where the majority of the five members come from the hill is thought to be unprecedented.

The Council believes the ideal solution to the challenge presented by the parish's two different areas is to ensure the two areas are allocated an equal number of councillors to be elected from two separate wards within the one parish. This proposal, we believe, would:

- *Provide more effective and convenient representation of residents at parish level than the current arrangement;*
- *Better reflect the identities and interests of the two distinct groups of residents in the parish;*
- *It would also address the Council's belief that its work would be strengthened by an increase in membership from five councillors to six.*

If the parish were divided into two wards, each could elect three councillors providing both the balance we seek and the increase in membership, needed for the reasons the Council set out in its letter requesting the review.

The Council accepts the exact boundary between the two wards will need to be decided, particularly to ensure the best solution for the very small number of residents who live west of the A34, neither in the village east of the A34 nor on the hill.

Summary of other responses

Five respondents provided a view on the proposed parish warding arrangements and number of parish councillors in South Hinksey. Three agreed and one disagreed with the proposal. Of the three comments submitted one person objected to the proposed warding arrangement.

Recommendation

To increase the number of parish councillors to six.

To ward the parish along the A34 with the wards of Village and Hinksey Hill each electing three parish councillors.

Justification

The electorate of South Hinksey is not expected to increase significantly over the next five years from the current level of 327. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance is that a council size of up to seven is appropriate for a council with an electorate of up to 900. Although the parish council did not have a contested election in 2011 or 2015 an increase in the size of the parish council to address workloads identified by the parish council is not unreasonable and complies with NALC guidance.

In considering whether to ward a parish consideration must be given to whether the number, or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or

inconvenient and it is desirable that any areas of the parish should be separately represented. The size of the electorate of South Hinksey does not make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient – the electorate vote at the same polling station.

The Local Government Boundary Commission guidance on community governance reviews states that the warding of parishes in largely rural areas may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, a village with a large rural hinterland or where, on the edge of towns, there has been some urban overspill into the parish.

From the submission of the parish council and the initial consultation responses, it is evident that South Hinksey Village and Hinksey Hill are different communities and have different issues/problems. The warding of the parish could ensure the interests and identities of the two communities are better reflected and represented. The parish of South Hinksey is bisected by the A34 and provides a well-defined boundary.