

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

held on Monday, 27 November 2017 at 6.30 pm
in Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Yvonne Constance (Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Charlotte Dickson, Gervase Duffield, Sandy Lovatt and Helen Pighills

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Harry Gable, Matt Gaskin, Margaret Reed

Number of members of the public: 6

19. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Ben Mabbett. Councillor Sandy Lovatt substituted.

20. Minutes

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2017 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

21. Declarations of interest

Councillor Charlotte Dickson made a statement that as a member of Wantage Town Council she would not vote on any issue which could impact on the boundary of the town (CGR C (24) and CGR D (24)). She also declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 8 due to work conflicts and left the meeting when this was discussed.

Councillor Sandy Lovatt and Councillor Helen Pighills both made statements in relation to Agenda Item 7 that as members of Abingdon Town Council they would not vote on this matter.

22. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

23. Public participation

The list of public speakers who had registered in relation to items on the agenda was tabled at the meeting.

With the approval of the Chairman, James Greenman, of Sunningwell Parish Council, was allowed to speak on Agenda Item 6 despite registering after the deadline.

24. Community Governance Review - final decisions

The committee discussed a series of community governance review proposals and made final decisions on them.

CGR B (21) – Kennington, Radley, Sunningwell, South Hinksey and Cumnor

The committee discussed proposals to either amend the boundary of Radley parish to include Chandlings Manor School currently in Kennington parish (subject to LGBCE consent), or to amend the boundary of Sunningwell parish to include land to the west of Oxford Road currently in Kennington and Radley parishes (subject to LGBCE consent). The committee also considered proposals from Sunningwell Parish Council and South Hinksey Parish Council as set out in the schedule of the report.

James Greenman from Sunningwell Parish Council clarified the parish council's support for the recommendation.

Councillor Lovatt questioned the merit of deferring community governance reviews until after the next scheduled elections in May 2019, on the grounds that any review outcomes would not be electorally implemented until 2023, but would impact parish governance before then.

The officer explained that carrying out community governance reviews earlier than this risks implementing changes and then undoing these, which is not clear for residents.

The committee noted Councillor Blagrove's enquiry as to whether there will be a mechanism in place to facilitate communication between parish councils on this matter. The officer detailed plans to write to all the parishes urging communication before 2019, and pointed out that reviews would be more structured in 2019, thus removing sources of tension between parishes.

The committee debated the item and agreed to make no change to the boundaries between Kennington, Radley and Sunningwell, and South Hinksey and Cumnor.

RESOLVED:

To make no change to the boundary between Kennington, Radley and Sunningwell and South Hinksey and Cumnor.

CGR A (13) – Grove and East Challow

The committee discussed a proposal to amend the boundary of Grove parish to include Grove Technology Park, currently in East Challow parish (subject to LGBCE consent).

Councillor Terry Fraser, of Grove Parish Council, spoke in favour of the boundary amendment and against the officers' recommendation, citing common perception that the Technology Park is in Grove due to its name and common access routes to the park being via Grove.

The committee debated the item and agreed, for the reasons set out in the report, to make no change to the current boundary between Grove and East Challow.

RESOLVED:

Not to include Grove Technology Park within Grove parish.

CGR C (24) – Wantage and Grove

The committee discussed a proposal to amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include all land at Stockham Farm currently in Grove Parish.

Councillor Charlotte Dickson did not vote on this item as a member of Wantage Town Council as she stated that she would not vote on any issue which could impact on the boundary of the town.

Councillor Terry Fraser, of Grove Parish Council, spoke in opposition citing possible loss of council tax revenue for Grove among other considerations.

The officer explained the rationale for the proposed transfer of land as being in accordance with public opinion and in the interests of community cohesion. Any potential council tax losses for Grove would not impact the financial viability of the parish council, and thus could not be considered a valid objection.

The committee debated the item and agreed, for the reasons set out in the report, to amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include all land at Stockham Park, currently in Grove parish, and to include this area in the current Segsbury ward of Wantage Town Council.

RESOLVED:

To amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include all land at Stockham Park, currently in Grove parish; and to include this area in the current Segsbury ward of Wantage Town Council.

CGR D (24) – Wantage, Grove and Lockinge

The committee discussed proposals to amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include land at Crab Hill, currently in both Grove and Lockinge parishes.

Councillor Charlotte Dickson did not vote on this item as a member of Wantage Town Council as she stated that she would not vote on any issue which could impact on the boundary of the town.

The committee agreed, for the reasons set out in the report, to amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include land at Crab Hill, currently in both Grove and Lockinge parishes and that Grove should continue to return 16 parish councillors: 11 for Grove North and 5 for Grove Brook.

RESOLVED:

1. To amend the boundary of Wantage parish to include land at Crab Hill, currently in both Grove and Lockinge parishes, and;
2. To include these areas of land in the Wantage Charlton ward of Wantage Town Council, and;
3. To remove the Crab Hill ward of Grove Parish Council, and;
4. That Grove Parish Council should return 16 councillors, as at present, representing Grove Brook (five councillors) and Grove North (11 councillors).

CGR E - Longworth

The committee discussed, for the reasons set out in the report, a proposal to remove the current warding arrangements for Longworth Parish Council, currently comprising east and west wards.

The committee agreed, for the reasons set out in the report, to remove the current warding arrangements for Longworth Parish Council.

RESOLVED:

To remove the current warding arrangements for Longworth Parish Council.

CGR F – East Hanney

The committee discussed a proposal to increase the number of councillors at East Hanney Parish Council from six to eight.

The committee agreed to the proposal for the reasons set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

To increase the number of councillors at East Hanney Parish Council from six to eight.

CGR G – South Hinksey

The committee discussed proposals to increase the size of South Hinksey Parish Council from five to six parish councillors and to ward the parish along the A34, with the wards of Village and Hinksey Hill each electing three councillors.

The committee agreed to the proposals for the reasons set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

To increase the size of South Hinksey Parish Council from five to six parish councillors and to ward the parish along the A34, with the wards of Village and Hinksey Hill each electing three councillors.

25. Community Governance Review - request to review the boundary between Abingdon-on-Thames and neighbouring parishes

The committee considered a request from Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council to review the boundaries between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, Sunningwell, Sutton Courtenay and St. Helen Without parishes.

Councillor Sandy Lovatt and Councillor Helen Pighills both stated that as members of Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council they would not vote on this matter.

Councillor Michael Page, of St. Helen Without Parish Council, objected to the proposal on the grounds that an early boundary review is not necessary and should be conducted on the same time schedule as other planned community governance reviews, scheduled to occur after May 2019.

Councillor Sandy Lovatt, of Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council, spoke in support of the request:

- Part 1 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan outlines major development plans for the district.
- Deferring a boundary review until after May 2019 means that any changes that arise from this will not come into effect electorally until May 2023. By this time, nearly all new houses scheduled to be built across the areas in question will have been built. If the town council's proposed boundary changes were delayed until this stage, the sudden changes in parish council tax rates could cause confusion and discontent.
- Many of the areas outlined in the proposal use Abingdon's amenities regularly.
- Given the financial and community implications of the proposed changes, a review should be undertaken now rather than beyond 2019, to allow residents time to adapt.

The officer confirmed that if the committee agreed to go forward with a review, they could amend parish boundaries accordingly. It was noted that the map being used as the basis for the discussion was produced by Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council, and that any review would be carried out using district council maps.

The committee agreed that:

- Under existing council guidelines, the boundary between areas A and B (see town council map attached to the report) would be subject to a boundary review because of scheduled developments that straddle parish boundaries.
- Since most of the basis for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council's request is based upon changes to this boundary only, considering further reviews of areas C and D (see map) complicates the matter at this stage.

On this basis, the committee proposed that a review of the boundary between areas A and B (see map) should commence immediately, while areas C and D should be deferred for consideration after May 2019.

The committee noted Councillor Ed Blagrove's view that any decisions on this matter should be based on officially commissioned district council information, and

subsequently he proposed that the committee reject Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council's request and submit a specific proposal based on the discussion.

The officer confirmed that if this was agreed to, terms of reference and subsequent maps would be produced and brought to a future meeting.

The committee agreed to undertake a community governance review of areas A and B as shown on the map attached to the report. They also agreed to defer any boundary reviews of areas C and D until after May 2019.

RESOLVED:

1. To undertake a community governance review of the parish boundary between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes as shown on the map attached to the report.
2. To authorise the head of legal and democratic services to draft and publish the terms of reference for the review.
3. To defer any boundary reviews of areas C and D until after May 2019.

26. Review of parliamentary constituencies - revised proposals

The committee discussed whether it wished to make representations to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) on the revised proposals for the parliamentary constituencies.

Councillor Charlotte Dickson declared an interest due to work conflicts and left the meeting when this item was discussed.

The committee agreed that the current revisions proposed by the BCE were satisfactory, and that no further representations were necessary.

RESOLVED:

1. To restate the response to the initial proposals requesting that the BCE consider amending the constituency boundaries to reflect the Local Government Boundary Commission for England related alteration order.

The meeting closed at 7.26 pm