



# ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

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21<sup>st</sup> September 2018

Mr Steven Corrigan  
Democratic Services Manager  
Vale of White Horse District Council  
Legal and Democratic  
135 Eastern Avenue  
Milton Park  
Milton  
OX14 4SB

By e-mail and by post

Dear Mr Corrigan

**Community Governance Review – Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes**

Thank you for your letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018 relating to the above and the further opportunity for this Council to make representations in relation to this matter.

Your letter and the accompanying papers have been circulated to all Members and considered by the Town Council's Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee.

In considering the matter the Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee noted the resolution of the District Council's Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018 which stated:

*A motion, moved and seconded, to agree draft proposals for consultation with the inclusion of the proposed boundary with the A34 to the north and the Oxford Road to the east was carried on being put to the vote. RESOLVED: to proceed with the community governance review in light of the initial consultation and to agree draft proposals for consultation in respect of the review of the boundaries between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell with an amendment to the proposed boundary with the A34 to the north and the*

*Oxford Road to the east, as shown on the map attached to the agenda pack for this meeting.*

The Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee had delegated powers to consider the proposals as they are in accordance with this Council's previously agreed view, as detailed in my letter of 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

**Parish Boundaries** The Town Council originally requested a community governance review in this area by way of my letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017. This letter and our subsequent correspondence have made the case for the review and for changes to the boundaries between Abingdon, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell, as detailed in your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018. These are areas allocated for housing within the 2031 Local Plan (Part 1) and known as the north and north-west Abingdon developments. These new developments will naturally form part of Abingdon as they are adjacent to existing housing developments in the town. The Town Council believes that the residents of these new housing developments will look south towards Abingdon for their services and infrastructure and that the proposals for changes to the boundaries will therefore reflect the identities and interests of those residents who will live in those areas and allow for the effective and convenient representation of the residents. The A34 will form a well-defined boundary between the communities of Abingdon and St Helen Without and Sunningwell.

Members also noted that the proposal now being considered includes the Town Council's request to transfer the additional land shaded red on the map enclosed with my letter of 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018, from Radley to Abingdon-on-Thames. This Council's view is that whilst this land is not part of the new housing developments it makes sense to include this land, bounded to the north by the A34 and to the east by the Oxford Road, within the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames. This would create a well-defined boundary and Members welcome this amendment to the original proposal.

**Timing of boundary changes** It is noted that at the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018 there was a debate regarding timing and it is minuted:

*The committee debated the item and agreed that timing was an issue. However, with agreement in principle from affected parish councils and the need to honour the Full Council policy agreed in July 2014 in place when this review was started, it would be sensible to continue with the review before the May 2019 elections. The houses in the development area will be marketed as being in Abingdon and the concerns regarding risk to election administration are minimal. Delaying the review until 2023 would be more damaging as the population would have grown by then. The current population is low enough to minimise any risk associated with the changes and the initial consultation received no response from residents.*

This Council has always understood that following a review any parish boundary changes agreed would take effect from the next local elections, in this case 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019. My understanding is that this is the standard practice when such reviews have taken place and implementation of any changes should to proceed on that basis, for the reasons detailed in the extract from the minutes above. To delay implementation

until substantial numbers of residents have moved in would also be potentially confusing for residents who move in to a development which has been marketed as Abingdon only to find it is in another parish and then becomes part of Abingdon at a later date.

**Electoral arrangements** The proposal of the District Council officers as detailed at paragraph 17 of the report to the meeting of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee is noted.

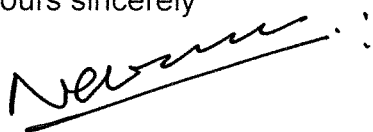
**Impact on District and County council boundaries** Paragraph 18 of the report to the meeting of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee is noted.

**Summary position** The Town Council agrees with the draft proposal in relation to the community governance review of the parish boundary between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes as agreed for consultation by the District Council's Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee at its meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and detailed in your letter (and associated documents), dated 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

In your letter you state that the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee will make a final decision on this matter at a meeting in October 2018 and I should be grateful if you could advise me of the date of that meeting.

Thank you for consulting the Town Council in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Warner', written over a horizontal line. The signature is slanted upwards to the right and ends with a small flourish.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk