

CGR_F

Parishes Affected

Sunningwell, Wootton and Cumnor

Matter to be considered

Amending the parish boundary to include the area of Boars Hill currently in Wootton and Cumnor parishes and amending the parish name to reflect the change.

Impact on district and county council boundaries

Affects Botley and Sunningwell, Cumnor and Wootton district wards
Affects Kennington and North Hinksey county divisions

Summary of responses to the draft proposal consultation

This is a request from Sunningwell Parish Council with support provided from the Boars Hill Association following a petition. Sunningwell Parish Council object to the draft proposal to make no change to the parish boundaries

In their consultation response, Sunningwell Parish Council claim that the district council misrepresented their original request and attach a number of emails to evidence this allegation in their consultation response.

The committee will note that this matter was addressed at the July meeting and included in the report schedule to that meeting which clarified the request from Sunningwell Parish Council and made clear that the parish was not proposing the transfer of land at Long Furlong in Sunningwell parish or seeking a change to the name of the parish. The misunderstanding arose from the content of an email from the parish clerk dated 29 November 2021 which included the following:

“We realise that such moves have a domino effect regarding number of electors in parishes.

To help balance that effect perhaps the part of Sunningwell parish in White Cross (Longfurlong Road) could be moved into Wootton Parish.

This would mean White Cross would also not be split between two parishes.

Additionally, electors in Sunningwell parish can be analysed:

Boars Hill 38%

Sunningwell 25%

Bayworth 23%

Long Furlong 14%

and it would be more sensible and judicious if the parish name could reflect that in some way please”.

As stated above, this matter was addressed prior to the committee agreeing its draft proposal and did not form part of the consultation.

Cumnor Parish Council supports the draft proposal to make no change to the boundary between Cumnor and Sunningwell parishes.

Wootton Parish Council supports the proposal to make no change to the boundary between Sunningwell and Wootton parishes and submitted a petition as part of their response, signed by over 234 residents, opposing any change to the parish boundary

Recommendation:

1. To make no change to the current boundary between Cumnor and Sunningwell parishes.
2. To transfer the properties within the Boars Hill area of Wootton parish to Sunningwell parish

Justification for the final recommendation

The submission for the boundary change between Sunningwell and Wootton provides two main reasons for the proposal:

- That the semi-rural community of Boars Hill has more in common with Sunningwell parish than Wootton parish
- That Wootton Parish Council has neglected the residents of Boars Hill whilst Sunningwell has supported projects that have supported Boars Hill.

In addition, there is a request from the Boars Hill Association supported by Sunningwell Parish Council, to transfer those Boars Hill properties located in Cumnor parish to Sunningwell parish in order to place all of Boars Hill within one parish.

The petition evidence submitted by Boars Hill Association appears to show strong support for the proposal. This seems to suggest that there is a strong sense of community with those residents living within Boars Hill and that the identities and interests of the residents would be better served being part of Sunningwell parish.

Cumnor and Sunningwell parish boundary

The proposal to transfer properties from Cumnor parish to Sunningwell parish was considered, and rejected, as part of a previous community governance review in 2016/17 which formed part of requests/proposals from Sunningwell Parish Council to transfer land from Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and South Hinksey parishes to Sunningwell parish. At that time Sunningwell Parish Council sought the transfer of areas of neighbouring parishes (Cumnor, South Hinksey and Wootton on the grounds that they formed part of the Boars Hill community and naturally related to the Boars Hill/Sunningwell. At that time no request was made to transfer the western area of Boars Hill from Wootton to Sunningwell).

Whilst the 2022 Boars Hill Association petition illustrated support for the change to the parish boundary no responses to our recent consultation were submitted from residents living within Cumnor parish (13 properties around Chilswell Farm and Youlbury). There is no evidence to suggest the residents of this part of Cumnor Parish have a shared identity or interests with residents of Sunningwell parish or that such a move would provide for effective and convenient local government. This area has a long historical connection with other hamlets in Cumnor (see Cumnor Parish Council's response dated 27 April 2022 circulated with the agenda for the meeting of this committee held on 26 May 2022).

Sunningwell and Wootton parish boundary

As can be seen from the engagement summary report, there is an almost equal split in the number of respondents who support or oppose a change to the parish boundary between Sunningwell and Wootton parishes. However, as can be seen from the "postcode map of responses" a majority of those residents living within the Boars Hill area of Wootton oppose the draft recommendation to make no change and support the transfer of the area to Sunningwell parish. A majority of those within Wootton parish wish to see no change with a mixed response from those living within the areas of Sunningwell parish outside the "Boars Hill" area.

Both the results of this engagement survey and the signatories to the original petition indicate that there is strong support for the transfer of that area of Boars Hill within Wootton parish to Sunningwell parish and that this could improve community cohesion.

Evidence has been provided of a strong community identity within Boars Hill, and survey responses have shown that there is disquiet regarding effective representation of Boars Hill residents within Wootton parish. Many respondents have also stated that the nature of the area is better aligned with the rural nature of Sunningwell parish. However, as addressed in the report schedule to the July meeting of this committee, it is not clear whether the change would provide greater access to effective and convenient services. Residents of Boars Hill use the facilities within Wootton (examples in the

survey feedback include the Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre, the cricket club which is named The Wootton and Boars Hill Cricket Club and the Wootton allotments) and presumably the primary school and shops.

The current arrangements for parishes in this area of the district have existed for many years. It is normal for rural areas parishes to be made up of different communities and hamlets, many of which may become obscure over the years as developments have taken place, but which continue to support community identity. This is true across the parishes of Sunningwell and Wootton with neighbours living in different parishes.

As with the review in 2016 this review has had a detrimental impact on parish council relations. As in 2016 the request for the review has come from Sunningwell Parish Council although this request has concentrated on the area of Boars Hill that currently lies in Wootton parish. It is clear from the 2022 petition and engagement survey that there is strong support from the Boars Hill properties for the requested boundary change.