

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



held on Tuesday 6 December 2022 at 7.00 pm
in the Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Ron Batstone (Chair), Sarah Medley (Vice-Chair), Paul Barrow, Mike Pighills and Janet Shelley

Officers: Susan Baker, Electoral Services Team Leader, and Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager

Remote attendance:

Jordan Kennedy and Chris McMullin, Electoral Services Officers

36. Apologies for absence

An apology was submitted on behalf of Councillor Alison Jenner.

37. Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

38. Declarations of interest

Councillor Ron Batstone declared an interest in item 6, Community Governance Review – Grove Technology Park, as he was a Grove parish councillor. Councillor Paul Barrow declared an interest in item 6, Community Governance Review – Grove Technology Park, as he was an East Challow Parish Councillor.

39. Urgent business and chair's announcements

None.

40. Public participation

Two members of the public had registered to address the committee as set out below:

- Yvonne Constance, an Oxfordshire County Councillor, on agenda item 6 - CGR_B Grove Technology Park.
- David Marsh, a Harwell resident, on agenda item 7 – “Harwell East” final recommendations.

41. Community Governance Review - Grove Technology Park

Councillor Barrow and Batstone declared an interest in this item (see minute 38), and as such did not take part in the decision-making on this item.

Yvonne Constance, an Oxfordshire County Councillor, addressed the committee. She made a statement opposing the transfer of Grove Technology Park from East Challow parish into Grove parish. She supported the recommendation to make no change to the boundary as set out in the schedule.

Further to minute 28/10/2022, the committee considered community governance review CGR_B on a proposal to amend the boundary of Grove parish to include Grove Business Park, currently in East Challow parish.

The committee agreed to make no change to the parish boundary. The current arrangements provided for a well-defined boundary. The proposed change did not impact on any properties and therefore did not impact on community identity.

RESOLVED: to make no change to the parish boundary between East Challow and Grove parishes.

42. Community Governance Review "Harwell East" final recommendations

David Marsh, a Harwell resident, addressed the committee in respect of this item. He stated that whilst the area of the new parish was geographically part of Harwell parish, with the street names in the area associated in some way with people who have lived in Harwell, it was clear that the residents did not identify with Harwell village. The inclusion of Didcot in the name of the new parish would not be appropriate as it was not part of Didcot or Didcot Town Council and could lead people to consider they were residents of Didcot. With the adjacent District Ward and County Division both being known as Didcot West a similar name for the new parish would cause confusion. He suggested that Western Valley, a name proposed in the consultation responses, would be appropriate as it referenced both housing developments – Great Western Park and Valley Park.

The committee considered the report of the head of legal and democratic on final recommendations in respect of the new parish on that part of the current parish of Harwell that lies to the east of the A34. Attached to the report was an Engagement Report which set out the findings of the consultation undertaken from 16 August until 30 September 2022.

The committee noted that the consultation responses showed support for the committee's draft proposals in respect of the style of governance, ordinary year of election, council size and parish warding arrangements.

As part of the consultation the committee had agreed to consult on a parish name of "Harwell East". The committee noted that the majority of respondents did not support the name with the majority supporting reference to Didcot, specifically Didcot West or West Didcot. This clearly reflected the fact that a large number of residents in the area did not associate themselves with Harwell but identified as being part of Didcot in respect of their community identity.

Whilst committee members acknowledged that it was understandable that residents within the area identified with Didcot due to the geographical proximity to the town, they agreed that the inclusion of Didcot in the name of the parish would not be appropriate. Geographically, as Didcot is located in the neighbouring district of South Oxfordshire, a separate parish with Didcot in the name would be confusing, also considering that Didcot West is the name of a district ward and county division within South Oxfordshire. The view was expressed that residents within Great Western Park were a distinct community with a separate identity from either Didcot or Harwell having its own resident's association. The name of the parish should reflect this separate identity. The proposed name of Western Valley would provide a reference to the two housing developments in the area, Great Western Park and Valley Park, and provide such an identity.

RESOLVED:

1. That the new parish will be called Western Valley.
2. That a parish council be established called Western Valley Parish Council.
3. That the effective date for the new parish will be 1 April 2023, with the first elections for the parish council to take place in May 2023.
4. That Western Valley Parish Council should return eight parish councillors.
5. That the parish should not be divided into wards.
6. To authorise the head of legal and democratic to draft the necessary Reorganisation Order.
7. To establish a shadow parish council prior to the first elections in May 2023 and that the head of legal and democratic, in consultation with the Chair of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues committee, is authorised to make the necessary arrangements associated with its establishment.

The meeting closed at 7:35pm