

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Council**

**16 October 2017**

<p><b>Community Governance Review – results of second consultation and final recommendations, and update regarding Parliamentary Boundary Review</b></p>
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### **Report of Chief Executive**

This report is public

#### **Purpose of report**

To consider the final recommendations from the Community Governance Review (CGR) Working group, following the second consultation phase.

To provide a further update regarding next stages of the Parliamentary Boundary Review.

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended to approve the following:

- 1.1 The separation of the existing Upper Heyford Parish into two, as shown on the map at Appendix 3.
- 1.2 The parishes being named Upper Heyford and Heyford Park, with the outer boundary of Heyford Park being as shown on the map at Appendix 3.
- 1.3 Upper Heyford Parish retaining six parish councillors, and Heyford Park having seven parish councillors.
- 1.4 The number of Parish Councillors for Fritwell being increased by one, from six to seven.
- 1.5 The number of Parish Councillors for Stratton Audley being increased by two, from five to seven.
- 1.6 The number of Parish Councillors for Tadmarton being reduced by one, from seven to six.
- 1.7 The number of Parish Councillors for Weston-on-the-Green being increased by one, from seven to eight.

- 1.8 The number of Parish Councillors for Yarnton being increased by one, from nine to 10.
- 1.9 Authority being delegated to the Chief Executive to respond to the third consultation of the Parliamentary Boundary Review, in consultation with the CGR/Parliamentary Boundary Review Working Group

## **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 In December 2016, Council approved a timetable for a limited scope Community Governance Review (CGR) to be carried out, focussing on a possible split of Upper Heyford Parish and requests from five parish councils for a review of their number of Parish Councillors.

## **3.0 Report Details**

- 3.3 At its meeting in July 2017, Council approved recommendations to form the basis of the second consultation phase.
- 3.4 Two consultation documents were produced, one specifically relating to Upper Heyford (**appendix 1**) and the other relating to the proposed change in numbers (**appendix 2**).
- 3.5 The consultation period ran from 31 July to 8 September. Both documents were available via the Council's website, with the option of completing an electronic survey. Paper copies of the Upper Heyford separation document were posted to all addresses in Upper Heyford, as well as being provided to Somerton Parish Council for forwarding to all residents in Somerton.
- 3.6 Parishes who had requested changes in parish councillor numbers were also asked if they would like to receive paper copies of the document.

### **Upper Heyford**

- 3.7 230 consultation responses were received, and results were as follows:

Question 1 – do you agree with the recommendation to separate Upper Heyford into two parishes?

196 respondents (85.2%) agreed

30 respondents (13%) didn't agree

4 respondents (1.7%) didn't answer the question

Question 2 – Do you agree with the parishes being named Upper Heyford and Heyford Park?

189 respondents (82.2%) agreed

36 respondents (15.7%) didn't agree

5 respondents (2.1%) didn't answer the question

Question 3 – Do you agree with the number of parish councillors being six for Upper Heyford and seven for Heyford Park?

187 respondents (81.3%) agreed  
37 respondents (16.1%) didn't agree  
6 respondents (2.6%) didn't answer the question

Question 4 – Do you agree with the position of the proposed boundary?

141 respondents (61.3%) agreed  
86 respondents (37.4%) didn't agree  
3 respondents (1.3%) didn't answer the question

- 3.8 The CGR working group therefore recommend that the separation of the existing parish of Upper Heyford be approved.
- 3.9 The parishes will be named Upper Heyford and Heyford Park.
- 3.10 Upper Heyford will have 6 parish councillors, and Heyford Park will have 7 parish councillors.
- 3.11 The CGR Working Group have considered all responses and comments made by residents of Somerton, in relation to the recommendation to move the boundary to the outer perimeter of the airfield.
- 3.12 CGR guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government states that “as far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the ‘no-man’s land’ between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable”
- 3.13 The CGR working group do feel that moving the boundary to run along the edge of the airfield is the most logical and easily identifiable position. Although fences can be removed, the well-established treeline along the northern edge of the airfield, and the route of the historic ‘Portway’ public footpath between Upper Heyford and Heyford Park are strong boundaries in their own right.
- 3.14 65 responses (28.3%) to the consultation were received from residents of Somerton, and 63 of these didn't agree with the recommendation regarding the position of the boundary.
- 3.15 The majority of comments from the Somerton residents related to the potential for the area of land moving from Somerton to Heyford Park changing categorisation, therefore increasing the likelihood of development on that section of the airfield.
- 3.16 Planning Policy colleagues were asked to explain the categorisation issue to the CGR Working Group.
- 3.17 The Deputy Manager – Planning Policy and Growth Strategy explained that Somerton village currently has a categorisation that means only infill development or conversions would be considered.
- 3.18 This categorisation applies to the village of Somerton only, not to the whole parish.

- 3.19 The former RAF Airbase, the area to become known as Heyford Park, doesn't have a categorisation. It has an allocation in the adopted Local Plan Part 1, with areas earmarked for development as shown in grey on the map at **appendix 4**
- 3.20 The Deputy Manager – Planning Policy and Growth Strategy explained that, in the event that the parish boundary between Somerton and Upper Heyford changed, the area of land moving from one parish to the other would not change categorisation.
- 3.21 The area of the airbase in question is an extremely important historical asset, as it is where the hardened shelters are that were used when the base was active. It is also a conservation area.
- 3.22 The importance of the site is reflected in Part 1 of the [Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031](#) (paras C.284 – C.293) specifically discusses Upper Heyford and the former airbase. Page 258 of the document states that “In order to avoid development on the most historically significant and sensitive parts of the site, new development is to be focused to the south of the flying field and on limited greenfield land to the south of Camp Road (and one greenfield area to the north of Camp Road, east of Larsen Road)”
- 3.23 In addition to this, the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy has confirmed that in the event of any development proposals near the border of the parishes, Somerton would continue to be consulted.
- 3.24 Given the explanation from Planning Policy colleagues, the fact that the area of land in question is a conservation area, and the historical value afforded to the site by Historic England, the CGR Working Group are content to recommend that the position of the boundary between Somerton and Heyford Park be moved to the edge of the airfield.
- 3.25 A number of comments received during the consultation questioned the influence of the Dorchester Group on the CGR process.
- 3.26 Cherwell District Council wish to make it clear that the CGR process is being carried out as a direct result of a long standing wish of Upper Heyford Parish Council, and at no point have the Dorchester Group made any requests regarding the position of the boundary.
- 3.27 Other comments received during the consultation again made reference to issues outside of the control of Cherwell District Council. These included queries regarding the bus routes; the requirement for bollards along Camp Road to prevent Somerton Road being used as a rat run; the requirement for a ring road for HGV traffic; the requirement for a speed camera; and the closure of Camp Road at the junction at Kidlington Road, to prevent HGVs turning towards Lower Heyford.
- Review of Parish Councillor numbers – Fritwell Parish**
- 3.28 Fritwell Parish Council contacted officers and requested that consideration be given to increasing the number of councillors for the parish from six to seven.
- 3.29 The working group recommended that the increase of one be approved for consultation.

- 3.30 No consultation responses were received regarding this recommendation.
- 3.31 The CGR Working Group therefore recommend that an increase of one parish councillor be approved, to take effect from May 2019.

**Review of Parish Councillor numbers – Stratton Audley**

- 3.32 Stratton Audley Parish Council contacted officers and requested that consideration be given to increasing the number of councillors for the parish from five to seven.
- 3.33 The working group recommended that the increase of two be approved for consultation.
- 3.34 No consultation responses were received regarding this recommendation.
- 3.35 The CGR working group therefore recommend that an increase of two parish councillors be approved, to take effect from May 2018.

**Review of Parish Councillor numbers – Tadmarton**

- 3.36 Tadmarton Parish Council contacted officers and requested that consideration be given to reducing the number of councillors for the parish from seven to six.
- 3.37 The working group feel that reducing the number of councillors could potentially cause issues with the quorum, in the event of holiday or sickness absence. They therefore recommended that the number of parish councillors remain seven.
- 3.38 Tadmarton Parish Council responded to the consultation, and provided the following reasoning for their request:

“The electorate remains fairly static in the Parish of Tadmarton in terms of numbers. Old residents leave and new ones arrive with regularity although I would suggest in percentage terms this is a small occurrence compared to the amount of dwellings we have. Over the past few years new councillors have been co-opted into their position. Whilst we have always remained between 6 and 7 the lack of ‘newcomers’ means that we are drawing from a small pool that has already been drawn upon many times. This makes the time taken to fill an empty position longer. To assist with this , we recommend 6 councillors to be sufficient for the number of residents and tasks at hand”.

- 3.39 In light of the response received from Tadmarton Parish Council, the CGR working group have reconsidered and now recommend that the number of parish councillors be reduced to six, to take effect from May 2018.

**Review of Parish Councillor numbers – Weston-on-the-Green**

- 3.40 Weston-on-the-Green Parish Council contacted officers and requested that consideration be given to increasing the number of councillors for the parish from seven to eight or nine.
- 3.41 The working group recommend that an increase of one be approved for consultation.
- 3.42 Two consultation responses were received. One was from the Parish Council, confirming that they still wanted an increase in numbers. The other was from a

resident who did not agree with the proposed increase, due to the number of co-options that had taken place over the last few years.

3.43 The CGR working group felt that the justification provided by Weston-on the-Green was sufficient to approve the increase.

3.44 The CGR working group therefore recommend than an increase of one parish councillor be approved, to take effect from May 2018.

#### **Review of Parish Councillor numbers – Yarnton**

3.45 Yarnton Parish Council contacted officers and requested that consideration be given to increasing the number of councillors for the parish from nine to 10.

3.46 The working group recommend that an increase of one be approved for consultation.

3.47 Two consultation responses were received, both of which agreed with recommendation to increase the number of parish councillors.

3.48 The CGR working group therefore recommend that an increase of one parish councillor be approved, to take effect from May 2019

#### **Next steps**

3.49 Recommendations approved by full Council will be incorporated into a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order, which will confirm implementation dates for each of the changes.

3.50 With regard to Heyford Park Parish Council, officers will instigate a 'shadow council' arrangement to work in conjunction with the existing Upper Heyford Parish Council until May 2019 when elections will be held to formally elect the new parish council.

3.51 Details of the parish split will be provided to colleagues in Council Tax, so that relevant arrangements can be made with regard to Council Tax charging ready to take effect in 2019.

3.52 All affected parishes will be contacted and advised of the changes agreed, and the implementation date.

#### **Parliamentary Boundary Review**

3.53 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) are in the process of carrying out a review of Parliamentary boundaries, with a view to reducing the overall number of MPs from 650 to 600 for the next General Election, currently scheduled to be held in 2022.

3.54 The BCE have announced that the revised recommendations for the review will be published on 17 October, and will signal the start of the third and final consultation period that will run until 11 December.

3.55 Due to the timing of the consultation period, it will not be possible for full Council to consider the revised recommendations.

- 3.56 Council are therefore recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to submit a response, following consultation with the CGR/Parliamentary Boundary Review Working group.

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Cherwell District Council committed to undertake a further CGR relating to Upper Heyford at the conclusion of the previous review in 2013. The final recommendations are considered to be in the best interests of all parishes concerned.

## **5.0 Consultation**

Full public consultation, with documents available via the Council website and in hard copy.

CGR Working Group – Councillors Andrew Beere, Hugo Brown, Nick Cotter, Kieron Mallon, Les Sibley and Sean Woodcock.

## **6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to approve the recommendations. This is rejected, as recommendations have been drafted based on requests and responses received from relevant parishes.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The separation of Upper Heyford will mean the possibility of a change in Council Tax precept amounts for both Upper Heyford and Heyford Park.

Comments checked by: Paul Sutton, Chief Finance Officer. 03000 030106, [paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk)

### **Legal Implications**

- 7.2 The Council is empowered to undertake a Community Governance Review by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. In undertaking the review it must take steps to ensure that the outcome of the review reflects the identities and interests of the area being reviewed and the need to ensure effective and convenient community governance. Statutory guidance on the process can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-governance-reviews-guidance>

Comments checked by: James Doble, Assistant Director – Transformation Governance and Monitoring Officer. 01295 221587, [james.doble@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:james.doble@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk)

## 8.0 Decision Information

### Wards Affected

CGR – Fringford and Heyfords; Deddington; Kidlington West; Launton and Otmoor

Parliamentary Boundary Review - all

### Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

### Lead Councillor

None

### Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Upper Heyford consultation document
Appendix 2	Possible change in the number of parish councillors consultation document
Appendix 3	Final recommendation regarding Upper Heyford and Heyford Park parishes – Map
Appendix 4	Allocation of land for development at RAF Upper Heyford - Map
Background Papers	
None	
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