

# Council

## Community Governance Review 2012

17 December 2012

### Report of Chief Executive

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on progress of the Community Governance Review, to outline timetables for consultation and consideration of responses and to appoint a Working Group to carry out detailed work on the Review.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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Council is recommended:

- (1) To note the contents of the report;
- (2) To delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to appoint two Members per Political Group to a Community Governance Review Working Group;
- (3) To delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance to arrange dates of meetings for the Working Group.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in February 2011, council received a report outlining a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England relating to the electoral boundaries and number of councillors in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 At the time of the previous report, council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review in 2012, and to consult on the principle of including the development sites of Bankside (Banbury), North West and South West Bicester within the boundaries of Banbury and Bicester Town Councils respectively.

## **Proposals**

- 2.1 There are several permitted and planned developments in Bicester and Banbury which fall outside the current electoral boundaries of the two towns (as set out in the appendices to this report). There are two problems with this. First, the Council may be in danger of breaching the population tolerance. If a 30% variance is reached in a ward, a district wide review is triggered (as has happened in West Oxfordshire). Second, urban developments may be charged on the basis of rural parish precepts whilst using the facilities of the urban area it is part of, and may require upkeep of common parts on those developments, which in effect will be unfunded unless parishes with traditionally low precepts significantly increase their precept.
- 2.2 The Review has been delayed for a number of reasons in the last year, including the Oxfordshire Boundary Review, the Police and Crime Commissioner elections and there is now a review planned of Cherwell District Council ward boundaries in Autumn 2013.

Consequently the Review will now be looking at Parish arrangements only (not polling districts and stations), and deciding whether or not these need changing. The key points to be considered during the process are:

- Whether a new parish or any new parishes should be created
- Whether existing parishes should or should not be abolished or whether the area of existing parishes should be altered
- Whether parishes should be warded and if so how these wards would represent the parish
- What the electoral arrangements for new or existing parishes, which are to have parish councils, should be (e.g. how many parish councillors are required)
- Whether any existing, or new, parishes should be grouped
- Whether related alterations to the boundaries of a principal council's electoral areas, following changes to parish boundaries, should be requested

We are now in a position to proceed with the Review, and the time table will be as follows:

### **December 2012**

Letters will be sent to all Town and Parish Councils, plus other consultees, providing details of the process, noting suggestions that have been received to date and asking for further issues to be

considered in the review. The deadline for submissions will be 31 January 2013.

**Early February 2013**

First meeting of the Working Group, where initial responses will be considered and a report prepared for Full Council to consider.

**Late February 2013**

Report submitted to Full Council on 25 February, which will ask for agreement to a proposal to be the subject of formal consultation. Following the meeting, details will be sent to all Town and Parish Councils, plus other consultees, for their views on the proposals.

**Late March/early April 2013**

Meeting of the Working Group to consider responses to the second consultation period, and consider if any changes are necessary. Report prepared for Full Council to consider

**May 2013**

Report submitted to Full Council on 15 May, detailing all of the proposals and in light of the consultation responses received, Council will approve or reject them, and confirm the implementation timetable for any changes to take effect.

2.3 An initial letter was sent to all Town and Parish Councils in April 2012, advising them of the intention to hold a Review. Responses received at the time included:

- Number of Parish Councillors at Middleton Stoney to be increased from 5 to 7
- An increase of numbers at Piddington Parish Council
- Consideration of the RAF base at Upper Heyford and the possibility of Warding for Upper Heyford Parish Council
- The Eco Town should not become part of Caversfield Parish Council

**Conclusion**

3.1 Officers recommend that a Working Group be set up to handle the work of the Community Governance Review, with a view to concluding the process by May 2013.

## **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

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The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Option One</b>   | To agree the recommendations     |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | Not to agree the recommendations |
| <b>Option Three</b> | To amend the recommendations     |

## **Consultations**

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<b>All Town and Parish Councils in Cherwell District</b>	The councils have been advised that Council will be asked to conduct a Community Governance Review, and will all be given the opportunity to submit their thoughts throughout the process.
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<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	Oxfordshire County Council has been advised that Council will be asked to conduct a Community Governance Review and the relationship to their boundary review currently under way.
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## **Implications**

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<b>Financial:</b>	The main costs associated with carrying out a review is in terms of the considerable staff time required, which will mean that the Democratic and Elections team will not be available to support other work areas during the review. Other costs associated with consultation and postage can be met from the existing elections and electoral registration budget.
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Comments checked by Sarah Best, Service Accountant for Resources. 01295 221736

<b>Legal:</b>	The above proposals are in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007 and will also serve to reduce if not eliminate anomalies in community governance that are present.
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Comments checked by Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance. 0300 0030 107

<b>Risk Management:</b>	The proposals ensure that the Council is meeting requirements to keep community governance arrangements under regular review and therefore mitigate risk to the council.
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Comments checked by Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance. 0300 0030 107

**Wards Affected**

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All

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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