

Cherwell District Council

Council

19 July 2021

Parliamentary Boundary Review and Cherwell District Wide Community Governance Review

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To advise Council of the 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review; to seek agreement to conduct a district wide Community Governance Review; to request the establishment of a Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review Working Group to consider issues from the Parliamentary Boundary review and the Community Governance Review.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To agree to establish a Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review (PBCGR) Working Group.
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders/ Spokesperson, to appoint three members from the Conservative Group, two members from the Labour Group, two members from the Progressive Oxfordshire Group and one member from the Independent Group to the Working Group.
- 1.2 To agree that Cherwell District Council submit a response to the Parliamentary Boundary Review and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Member Working Group, to finalise the Council's first consultation submission on the Parliamentary Boundary review to the Boundary Commission for England.
- 1.3 To agree that a district wide Community Governance Review be undertaken and, subject to agreement, endorse the next steps detailed at paragraph 3.16.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Boundary Commission for England is currently consulting on initial proposals for Parliamentary Constituency boundary changes, for implementation in 2023

- 2.2 A Community Governance Review (CGR) is the process for making changes to parishes in a Council area. Changes that can be made include creating, merging or abolishing parishes; changing the boundaries; and altering the number of parish councillors.
- 2.3 In recent years the council has conducted ad-hoc CGRs arising from requests or a petition. Three further requests for CGRs have been received from parishes in the district. Rather than conduct a further ad-hoc CGR to consider these three requests, as a district wide CGR to include boundary matters has not been carried out since 2013, it is considered timely to do so and include these requests as part of this review.

3.0 Report Details

Parliamentary Boundary Review

- 3.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 3.2 Following the passing of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 in December 2020, and the publication of the relevant Parliamentary electorate data in January 2021, BCE began a new review of all Parliamentary constituencies in England. This is referred to as the '2023 Review' as the BCE is required to report with its final recommendations by 1 July 2023.
- 3.3 The timetable for the review is:
- 5 January 2021: Publication of headline electorate figures by ONS. BCE commence development of initial proposals;
 - 24 March 2021: Publish complete ward-level electorate figures;
 - 10 May 2021: Publish [Guide to the 2023 Review](#)
 - 8 June 2021: Publish initial proposals and conduct eight-week written consultation (submission deadline Monday 2 August 2021);
 - Early 2022: Publish responses to initial proposals and conduct six-week 'secondary consultation', including between two and five public hearings in each region;
 - Late 2022: Publish revised proposals and conduct four-week written consultation;
 - June 2023: Submit and publish final report and recommendations.
- 3.3 There is no change to the overall number of constituencies in the UK (650) or the number in England (534), however the distribution of constituencies among the nine English regions has resulted in an increase of seven constituencies in the South East, which Cherwell District Council (CDC) is in, to 91. All recommended constituencies must have no less than 69,724 Parliamentary electors and no more than 77,062 (except 'protected' constituencies).
- 3.4 In line with the 2023 Review timetable, on 8 June BCE published its [initial proposals](#) for how the 543 constituencies for England could be drawn up within the legal parameters.

3.5 In summary, the current position and proposals as they relate to CDC are:

Current position

- The current constituencies are based on the pre-2015 district wards resulting in wards in the south of the district being divided into different constituencies.
- The Cherwell parishes of Bletchington, Charlton on Otmoor, Fencott & Murcott, Horton-Cum-Studley, Islip, Kirtlington Merton, Noke, Shipton-on-Cherwell and Weston-on-the-Green (approximately 4300 electors) are within the Henley constituency. The South Oxfordshire District Council (Acting) Returning Officer administers parliamentary elections in the Henley constituency.
- The Cherwell parishes of Begbroke, Kidlington and Yarnton (approximately 13,600 electors) are within the Oxford West & Abingdon constituency. The Vale of White Horse District Council (Acting) Returning Officer administers parliamentary elections in the Oxford West & Abingdon Constituency.
- The remaining areas in CDC are in the Banbury constituency (approximately 90,100 electors), which is administered by the CDC (Acting) Returning Officer.
- The map at Appendix 1 shows the current constituencies in CDC.

BCE Proposals

- The proposals are based on the current ward boundaries following the 2015 CDC boundary review.
- No Cherwell parishes will any longer fall under a constituency that is administered by a different local authority.
- All CDC district wards will come under either the Banbury constituency (approximate electorate 69,943) or the new Bicester constituency (approximate electorate 70,389). Both constituencies will incorporate district wards from West Oxfordshire District Council.
- The CDC (Acting) Returning Officer will be responsible for the administration of parliamentary elections for both the Banbury and Bicester constituencies
- Appendix 2 is a table which sets out the current and proposed constituency by ward.
- Appendix 3 is the BCE map setting out the proposals for the Banbury constituency.
- Appendix 4 is the BCE map setting out the proposals for the Bicester constituency.
- Appendix 5 is a map detailing the parish and district ward boundaries and the proposed Banbury and Bicester constituencies
- Appendix 6 is a map detailing the parish and district ward boundaries, current and proposed constituency boundaries
- Appendix 7 is the BCE map setting out the proposals for the South East.

3.6 As the consultation ends before the next scheduled meeting of full Council, it is proposed to establish a Member working group and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the working group, to finalise and submit the initial proposals consultation response of Cherwell District Council to the BCE.

3.7 Notwithstanding the proposal for a CDC consultation response to be submitted any individual or organisation can submit their own consultation response via the [BCE Consultation Portal](#)

- 3.8 The BCE advises that those who respond to the consultation are requested to say whether they approve of, or object to, the BCE's proposals. In particular, objectors are advised to say what they propose in place of the BCE's proposals.
- Community Governance Review (CGR)**
- 3.9 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4, Chapter 3) gives power to principal councils (in this context that means Cherwell District Council) to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR).
- 3.10 Reviews are undertaken in accordance with the 2007 Act (and subsequent amendments) and the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in March 2010 ("the guidance")
- 3.11 The guidance states that it is good practice for principal councils to undertake district wide CGR. The last full review was concluded in December 2013. At that time the Council committed to undertake a further CGR within 5 years specifically to consider the split of Upper Heyford Parish Council. This review considered five further requests regarding changes to the number of councillors but no requests in relation to boundary changes and concluded in 2017. Since that time two further CGRs have been undertaken, one as a result of a CGR petition.
- 3.12 Three requests have been received for a CGR to be carried out as detailed below:
- Ambrosden Parish Council – review the parish boundary between Ambrosden and Blackthorn Parish Councils
 - Claydon-with-Clattercote Parish Council – increase in the number of parish councillors
 - Drayton Parish Council – change the boundary between Drayton Parish Council and Banbury Town Council
- 3.13 Whilst it is less than ten years since the last previous review, given that three requests have been received, it is considered timely and best use of resources to ask all parishes if there are areas they wish to be considered, and all requests be incorporated as part of one CGR rather than carry out ad-hoc CGRs.
- 3.14 A review provides an opportunity for the principal authority to review and make changes to community governance within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population, additional development or in reaction to specific, or local new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective and convenient and it reflects the identities, interests and historic traditions of the community.
- 3.15 The District Council wants to ensure that electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. It considers that this sense of identity and community lends strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government, engenders visionary leadership and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.
- 3.16 If Council were to agree to a district wide CGR, the next steps would be:

- July – September: All parishes contacted to ask for any areas they would like to be reviewed (NB. where CDC has concluded a CGR within the last two years that covers the whole or a significant part of a request, CDC is not required to include this as part of the review)
- September-October: Working Group to consider responses and draft Terms of Reference
- 18 October: Full Council consider CGR Terms of Reference, including the timetable for the review
- October 2021 – October 2022: CGR conducted in accordance with the agreed Terms of reference and timetable

Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review (PBCGR) Working Group

- 3.17 A Working Group needs to be established to consider the Parliamentary Boundary Review proposals. The Working Group would also work on all aspects of the CGR, making recommendations to full Council for consideration.
- 3.18 It is proposed that the Working Group comprise three members from the Conservative Group, two members from the Labour Group, two members from the Progressive Oxfordshire Group and one member from the Independent Group.
- 3.19 Working Group members would act on behalf of their Political Groups feeding in the views of their Group to the Parliamentary Boundary Review responses. With regards to the CGR, the Working Group will deal with the ongoing work of the review, in conjunction with officers from the Democratic and Elections team, reviewing consultation responses and formulating recommendations for consideration by Council.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is important for Cherwell District Council to respond to the Boundary Commission for England consultation on Parliamentary Boundaries, due to the impact on all residents in the district.
- 4.2 A Community Governance Review provides an opportunity for CDC to review and consider and make changes to community governance, subject to consultation outcomes, within the district.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 None in the preparation of this report.
- 5.2 The Boundary Commission for England is conducting the Parliamentary Boundary Review and conducting the consultation for the review.
- 5.3 If agreement is given to a district wide Community Governance Review, the timetable included in the Terms of Reference will include two public consultation stages.

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 respond to the Parliamentary Boundary Review consultation. This is rejected as this could result in the District having Constituency boundaries imposed which do not offer the best representation for the electorate

Option 2: Not to carry out a district wide Community Governance Review. This is rejected as three requests for reviews have been received and it is timely and best use of resources to combine with any other requests from parishes across the district.

Option 3: Not to establish a Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review Working Group. This is rejected as this would not be in accordance with the approach taken for considering previous boundary reviews and Community Governance Reviews. The Working Group would support the process.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. If agreed, the cost of carry out a Community Governance Review can be met from existing budgets.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance,
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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.

Comments checked by:

Sukdave Ghuman, Head of Legal Services, sukdave.ghuman@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:

Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
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Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no equalities and inclusion implications arising directly from this report. Should agreement be given to undertake a Community Governance Review, the council must take steps to ensure that the outcome of the review reflects the

identities and interests of the area(s) being reviewed and the need to ensure effective and convenient community governance.

Comments checked by:

Emily Schofield, Acting Head of Strategy, Emily.Schofield@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision (Executive reports only; state N/A if not Executive report)

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

N/A

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 – Map detailing current constituencies for CDC
- Appendix 2 – Table - Current and proposed constituency by district ward
- Appendix 3 – Map: BCE South East Initial Proposals – Banbury constituency
- Appendix 4 – Map: BCE South East Initial Proposals – Bicester constituency
- Appendix 5 – Map detailing the parish and district ward boundaries and proposed Banbury and Bicester constituencies
- Appendix 6 - Map detailing the parish and district ward boundaries, current and proposed constituency boundaries
- Appendix 7 – Map: BCE All South East Initial Proposals

Background papers

None

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