

Cherwell District Council

Council

18 October 2021

Cherwell District Wide Community Governance Review 2021

Report of Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

This report is public

Purpose of report

For Council to approve the Terms of Reference for the District Wide Community Governance Review 2021; to delegate authority to the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the working group, to make minor amendments to the timetable if required.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review (CGR) (appendix 1 to the report)
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman in the Chairman's absence) of the Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review working group, to make minor amendments to the timetable for the CGR if required.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 At the 19 July 2021 meeting Council agreed that a district wide CGR should be undertaken.
- 2.2 The Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review working group ("the working group") was established, and consists of Councillors Kieron Mallon (Chairman), Andrew Beere (Vice-Chairman), Conrad Copeland, Perran Moon, Ian Middleton, Lynn Pratt, George Reynolds and Les Sibley.
- 2.3 All town/parish councils and district councillors were invited to submit issues for consideration between 20 July and 17 September 2021.
- 2.4 All responses have been gathered and Terms of Reference for the review have been drafted.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 All town/parish councils were contacted in July and given the opportunity to submit issues for consideration as part of the CGR.
- 3.3 All District Councillors and a small group of officers were also contacted and asked to submit details of any issues they were aware of in their Wards/in the district in general.
- 3.4 The officers contacted were from teams that have regular involvement with boundaries, such as Street Naming and Numbering, GIS mapping, Council Tax and Planning, and were therefore in a position to advise the Democratic and Elections Team of any areas that may benefit from review during the CGR.
- 3.5 The following responses were received:

Boundary between Ambrosden and Blackthorn

- 3.6 Ambrosden Parish Council and Councillor Dan Sames had previously raised the situation regarding new development across the Ambrosden/Blackthorn boundary.
- 3.7 Ambrosden Parish Council again requested that the boundary be reviewed around the Church Leys Field development (map 1, area A in the Terms of Reference).

Banbury

- 3.8 Banbury Town Council requested that their external boundaries with all neighbouring parishes be reviewed, following recent developments across the town (maps 2 and 3 in the Terms of Reference).

Drayton/Banbury

- 3.9 Drayton Parish Council and Councillor George Reynolds had previously raised the situation regarding the boundary between Drayton and Banbury.
- 3.10 Drayton Parish Council confirmed that they would like the boundary to be reviewed around the Walker Road/Jarvis Circle development, with consideration also given to the Drayton Lodge Farm development and the land leading up to the Hanwell boundary (map 2, areas B, C and D in the Terms of Reference).

Bodicote/Banbury

- 3.11 Councillor Kieron Mallon, Chairman of the Working Group, and the Street Naming and Numbering Officer of the Council both advised that two properties within the Longford Park development in Banbury remain in Bodicote parish. The rest of

Longford Park was moved into Banbury in 2013 (map 3, area F in the Terms of Reference).

Banbury/Bodicote/Adderbury

- 3.12 The Street Naming and Numbering Officer highlighted recently permitted planning application 19/01047/OUT, which crosses the boundaries of Banbury, Bodicote and Adderbury (map 3, area E in the Terms of Reference).

Bicester

- 3.13 A number of issues were submitted relating to boundaries in Bicester

Bicester Avenue/Chesterton

- 3.14 The Street Naming and Numbering Officer advised that Charles Shouler Way in Bicester, specifically the commercial development under planning application reference 19/01740/HYBRID, was in Chesterton parish rather than Bicester (map 5, area K in the Terms of Reference).

Skimmingdish Lane/Launton

- 3.15 The Street Naming and Numbering Officer advised that the boundary along Skimmingdish Lane follows the smaller lane and not the main A41 Skimmingdish Lane, meaning Bicester Airfield and commercial development to the north of the A41 is within Launton parish (map 5, area J in the Terms of Reference).

Wretchwick Green

- 3.16 Councillor Dan Sames and the Street Naming and Numbering Officer both advised that the proposed Wretchwick Green development, being considered under planning application reference number 16/01268/OUT, would be in Ambrosden and Blackthorn parishes rather than Bicester (map 5, area L in the Terms of Reference).

Bicester/Bucknell/Chesterton

- 3.17 Several requests have been made relating to the same area of boundary between Bicester, Bucknell and Chesterton (map 4 in the Terms of Reference).
- 3.18 Chesterton Parish Council requested that the boundary with Bucknell be considered, as it currently strays from the Middleton Stoney Road to follow field boundaries on either side of the road (map 4, areas G and H).
- 3.19 Bucknell Parish Council had separately requested a review of the boundary with Bicester, in relation to planning application 21/02339/REM.
- 3.20 The Planning Officer for the application advised that the development was already within the parish boundary of Bicester, but a small section of the outline application 14/02121/OUT was within Chesterton Parish due to the boundary not following the road at that point (map 4, area I).

Epwell/Sibford Gower

- 3.21 Epwell Parish Council requested that the boundary with Sibford Gower be reviewed, to move an area of woodland and some fields from Sibford Gower in to Epwell (map 6, area M in the Terms of Reference).
- 3.22 Epwell Parish Council advised that they had spoken to Sibford Gower prior to submitting the request, and Sibford Gower had been supportive of the proposal.

Horley/Hanwell/Wroxton

- 3.23 Horley Parish Council requested that the boundaries with Hanwell and Wroxton be reviewed to move land out of the neighbouring parishes and into Horley (map 7, areas N and O in the Terms of Reference).

Kidlington/Gosford & Water Eaton

- 3.24 Kidlington Parish Council expressed an early interest in being involved in the review, and following detailed discussion requested that consideration be given to merging the parish with Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council (map 8 in the Terms of Reference).
- 3.25 Kidlington Parish Council have subsequently requested that consideration also be given to amending the existing boundary with Gosford & Water Eaton Parish, so that it follows the North-South Bicester Road (map 8, area P in the Terms of Reference).
- 3.26 Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council do not support the proposal to merge the two parishes. At the time of writing it is not known if Gosford & Water Eaton support the alternative suggestion regarding an amended boundary.

Begbroke

- 3.27 Begbroke Parish Council requested that the number of parish councillors be increased by one, taking them from six to seven.

Chesterton

- 3.28 As well as reviewing the boundary with Bucknell, Chesterton Parish Council requested that the number of parish councillors be increased by one, taking them from seven to eight.

Somerton

- 3.29 Somerton Parish Council requested that the number of parish councillors be increased by one, taking them from five to six.

Issues not pursued.

- 3.30 A number of parishes expressed early interest in being involved in the review, but following detailed discussions decided not to request anything specific for their area.

- 3.31 Bodicote Parish Council considered the situation with the recent housing developments, and subsequently requested assurance that the existing parish boundaries would remain unaltered.
- 3.32 As a result of requests from Banbury Town Council and issues raised by officers as set out at paragraphs 3.8 and 3.12, it was not possible to provide the assurances requested.
- 3.33 Councillor Barry Wood raised a recent scoping planning application on the Bicester/Bucknell boundary, and whether consideration should be given to amending the existing boundary between the parishes.
- 3.34 After consulting Planning officers it was decided that considering any form of boundary amendment in the area of the scoping application would be premature, as no pre-application discussions had taken place and the majority of the scoping application site already sits within Bicester.
- 3.35 Caversfield Parish Council expressed an early interest in being involved in the review, but following detailed discussion decided not to request any areas for review.
- 3.36 Claydon with Clattercote Parish Council had previously contacted the Democratic and Elections team requesting an additional parish councillor.
- 3.37 Democratic and Elections officers contacted the parish council to see if they still wanted to pursue this, and they responded that they are content with their current number.
- 3.38 Claydon with Clattercote Parish Council did raise the issue of the parish council model in general, and how parishes such as Claydon and Banbury may appear the same on paper but in reality the workloads and requirements of the two parishes are very different.
- 3.39 Unfortunately the points raised by Claydon with Clattercote Parish Council are not within the remit of a CGR, and Cherwell District Council is not able to address them.
- 3.40 Yarnton Parish Council expressed an early interest in being involved in the review, and discussed the possibility of reviewing boundaries in light of anticipated local plan development.
- 3.41 Following further discussion Yarnton decided it was too early to consider boundaries, and advised they would not be putting forward any issues for consideration.
- 3.42 The next stage for the review is for the Terms of Reference to be approved, at which point the CGR officially starts.
- 3.43 Once the Terms of Reference for the review have been approved, it will not be possible for further issues or areas to be added as this would require further consideration and resolution of Council, which would mean the review would not be concluded within the 12 month timeframe.

- 3.44 The first consultation period is scheduled to start on Monday 22 November 2021. Officers will spend the weeks after the Council meeting preparing various consultation documents and response questionnaires, which will be made available to any interested party in line with government guidance on the conduct of a CGR.
- 3.45 Where a residential property is directly affected by a proposal i.e. if a boundary is moved and the property becomes part of a different parish, a paper consultation document, reply slip and envelope will be posted out in order to ensure residents are aware of the proposals. Relevant town/parish councils will also be invited to submit consultation responses.
- 3.46 Copies of consultation documents will be provided to any community buildings in relevant areas such as community centres or libraries, to increase awareness of the consultation. An online response method will also be available, in line with guidance from the council's Communications and Engagement Team.
- 3.47 Democratic and Elections Officers will also engage the Communications and Engagement Team to ensure awareness of the consultation across the district, and will offer to attend town/parish council meetings and any other public events which may be taking place during the consultation periods, to discuss the proposals and answer any questions people may have.
- 3.48 The first consultation will run to Monday 31 January 2022, after which the working group will consider all consultation responses received before drafting recommendations for stage two of the review.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 A Community Governance Review provides an opportunity for the Council to review and consider and make changes to community governance, subject to consultation outcomes, within the district.
- 4.2 The timetable included in the Terms of Reference has been drafted taking into account timescales for consultation documents to be produced and printed by an external provider and avoiding consultation during the pre-election period in the lead up to the May 2022 local elections.
- 4.3 The calendar of meetings for 2022-2023 is due to be considered later on in the Council agenda. Once approved, the proposed date of the October 2022 Council meeting, 17 October, will be added to the timetable before the final Terms of Reference are published.
- 4.4 Delegating authority to the Director Law and Governance in consultation with the Chairman of the working group (or Vice-Chairman in his absence) to make minor amendments to the timetable will allow work on the review to continue should any issues occur during the drafting of consultation documents.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 The Community Governance Review Working Group has agreed the proposed consultation approach.
- 5.2 Public consultation will take place from 22 November 2021 to 31 January 2022, and from 4 July to 9 September 2022

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 Terms of Reference for the review. This is rejected, as Council has already agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review and the requests submitted by town/parish councils, district councillors and officers are all valid and should proceed to consultation.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The cost of carrying out the Community Governance Review can be met from existing budgets, with consultation documents made available electronically and paper copies limited to those residential addresses directly affected.

Comments checked by:

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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. The review will be carried out in line with government guidance and following the wishes of the Parliamentary Boundary and Community Governance Review Working Group.

Comments checked by:

Richard Hawtin, Team Leader – Property and Contracts, Tel: 01295 221695, Email: richard.hawtin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 The last district-wide Community Governance Review was completed in 2013. Since the completion of that review there has been large scale development across the district, which in some areas has crossed parish boundaries. These areas have been included in the Terms of Reference for the review. The CGR process is an opportunity for the council to re-draw parish boundaries where the proposals are supported by electors, resulting in clarity regarding local identity and reducing the risk of elector confusion.

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. The council will 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:
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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

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 and associated annexes – Terms of Reference

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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