

**REPORT TO:** Civic Affairs Committee

29 October 2019

**LEAD OFFICER:** Sustainable Communities and Partnerships Manager

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**Consideration of a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick, prompted by the development at Northstowe,**

## **Executive Summary**

1. The new community at Northstowe, in the north west of the district, has been planned as a distinctive new town of 10,000 homes, with green space used to separate it from the neighbouring villages of Longstanton and Oakington.
2. The new development straddles the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick.
3. The Civic Affairs Committee has been regularly updated as to the need to conduct a Community Governance Review in response to the creation of this new community.
4. The Committee is now invited to consider the timing and draft terms of reference for a review of community governance arrangements in Northstowe and the surrounding settlements.

## **Key Decision**

5. No.

## **Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that Civic Affairs Committee  
Decides whether to commence with a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick based on the draft terms of reference (Appendix A), taking into consideration the timing of such a review.
7. Should the Committee agree to commence a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick they will need to:
  - (a) agree, with or without amendments, the draft terms of reference (Appendix A), and
  - (b) agree an indicative timetable for the review.

## Reasons for Recommendations

8. The District Council is obliged to keep under review the community governance arrangements for its area, to ensure that the arrangements in place continue to allow good community engagement, good local democracy and permit the effective and convenient delivery of local services.
9. The emergent new community at Northstowe is developing its own, distinctive identity, with interests that are separate to and different from those of the established community of Longstanton, where Northstowe residents are currently represented via Longstanton Parish Council.
10. The consultation will cover;
  - Parish boundaries.
  - Electoral arrangements.
  - Whether to create a new parish and if so, style, name and number of Councillors.
  - Possible interim arrangements.

## Details

11. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) provides for a Principal Council to conduct a review of the community governance arrangements for the whole or part of its area for the purpose of considering whether or not to make any changes to Parish boundaries or size, and/or the creation of new parishes; and the review of the electoral arrangements for new and/or existing parishes. Section 93 of the 2007 Act allows principal councils to decide how to undertake such a review, provided that they comply with the duties in the Act which apply to councils undertaking reviews. If, following a review, the Council decides that changes should be made to the electoral arrangements; they may make an Order giving effect to the changes.

The Guidance also states that in reaching conclusions on the boundaries between parish wards the principal council should take account of community identity and interests in the area and consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by the drawing of particular ward boundaries. Principal councils should seek views on such matters during the course of a Community Governance Review and seek sound and demonstrable evidence of such identities and linkage.

12. Civic Affairs Committee has previously considered this matter and agreed action plans and a direction of travel for the Community Governance Review to respond to the new development at Northstowe:
  - a. 20 March 2014 – The Committee passed the following resolution “The Civic Affairs Committee AGREED with the establishment of an independent Northstowe Parish Council with the aim of a review commencing in April 2017, to be reviewed in June 2016.”

- b. Due to a delay in the build out of Northstowe, (first occupation May 2017) a Community Governance Review at the time originally anticipated would not have been feasible. On 4 September 2018 a new proposed timetable for a Community Governance Review was presented to the Civic Affairs Committee. The Committee NOTED that Longstanton Parish Council had requested that the Community Governance Review be delayed until the summer of 2019. It was understood that this would allow residents of Northstowe to gain more experience as parish councillors on Longstanton Parish Council and also allow for an increase in residents in Northstowe to consult on the review, hence the delay in bringing forward the draft terms of reference for consideration by the committee.
13. The guidance states that when considering parish boundaries, the principal council should ensure they consider the desirability of fixing boundaries which are, and will remain, easily identifiable, as well as taking into account any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries. A review offers an opportunity to put in place strong-clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features, and remove anomalous parish boundaries.
14. The Principal Council is required to determine the terms of reference under which a Community Governance Review is to be undertaken. The terms of reference must clearly specify the area under review and must be published. The guidance states that “Ultimately, the recommendations made in a Community Governance Review ought to bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services”.

## Considerations

15. Following informal briefings with parishes affected by the proposed Community Governance Review, Civic Affairs Committee is invited to consider the draft terms of reference for a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington, which can be found at Appendix A. The terms of reference set out the matters on which a Community Governance Review could focus.
16. The formal publication of terms of reference will begin a review and the review must be completed within twelve months and concludes when the council publishes the recommendations made in the review. Should the Committee decide to commence the Community Governance Review a timeline would need to be agreed.
17. At the time of writing the number of occupations at Northstowe stands at 440, with 488 electors registered with Northstowe post codes.
18. The Committee may wish to consider the forecast housing trajectory for the development at Northstowe, as well as the electorate forecast:
- 2019/20 – 813 electors (accumulative total 495 dwellings)
  - 2020/21 – 1,164 electors (accumulative total 709 dwellings)
  - 2021/22 – 1,522 electors (accumulative total 927 dwellings)
  - 2022/23 – 1,919 electors (accumulative total 1,169 dwellings)
  - 2023/24 – 2,330 electors (accumulative total 1,419 dwellings)
  - 2024/25 – 2,740 electors (accumulative total 1,669 dwellings)

19. The current electorate for Longstanton is 2,567, this excludes the 488 electors with Northstowe postcodes. The electorate for Oakington is 1,174. The five year housing trajectory forecasts an additional 12 dwellings in Longstanton and 6 dwellings in Oakington which could increase the number of electors by 20 and 11 respectively.
20. The Committee may also wish to consider the schedule of ordinary elections in South Cambridgeshire. Elections to Longstanton and Oakington & Westwick Parish Councils are next due in 2022, alongside all out elections for the district council. If a review finds that it will be appropriate to hold an election for parish councillors, for example to form a newly created or warded parish, at an earlier date than the next scheduled ordinary elections, the terms of office of any newly elected parish councillors will be so reduced or extended as to enable the electoral cycle to revert to the normal cycle at the next ordinary elections. Depending on the timing of a review, elections for any newly formed council could take place in May 2021, to coincide with the County Council and Combined Authority elections, or in 2022 combined with district council elections and the elections for all parishes in South Cambridgeshire.
21. Informal briefings with the following parish councils have already taken place: Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick, Willingham, Over, Swavesey and Cottenham, with Rampton to follow in the first week of November. A written response is anticipated from Longstanton Parish Council following publication of this report.

## **Consequential Amendments and District Electoral Review**

22. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) undertook a full electoral review of the district's warding arrangements in 2017, with the new district ward boundaries being implemented at all out elections in May 2018.
23. The Committee will also be aware that the Council only has the power to amend parish boundaries. District ward and county division boundaries will not be automatically updated by any changes to parish arrangements made by Community Governance Reviews. Should any district ward or county division boundaries need to be updated after a Community Governance Review the Council would have to apply to the LGBCE to make consequential amendments to those boundaries.
24. Any consultation on governance arrangements will include consultation on future polling arrangements for the area.

## **Options**

25. The Committee could resolve to commence a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington & Westwick. Alternatively, the Committee could decide that a Community Governance Review of the Parishes at this time is not necessary.
26. Should the Committee agree to commence a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick, they will need to:

- a. agree, with or without amendments, the draft terms of reference (Appendix A), and
- b. agree an indicative timetable for the review (included as Section 2.6 in the ToR).

## Implications

27. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

## Financial

28. The cost for parish council elections falls to the parish. There would be a cost to elections in a new parish were this to be agreed and therefore it would be prudent to schedule any review so that it completes in time for elections to coincide with other polls.

## Legal

29. By section 82 the 2007 Act Councils have a discretionary power to undertake a CGR.

Section 93 the 2007 Act states the following duties of a Council in undertaking a review:

“(1) The principal council must comply with the duties in this section when undertaking a community governance review.

(2) But, subject to those duties, it is for the principal council to decide how to undertake the review.

(3) The principal council must consult the following—

(a) the local government electors for the area under review;

(b) any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review.

(4) The principal council must have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review—

(a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and

(b) is effective and convenient.

(5) In deciding what recommendations to make, the principal council must take into account any other arrangements (apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions)—

(a) that have already been made, or

(b) that could be made,  
for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review.

(6) The principal council must take into account any representations received in connection with the review.

(7) As soon as practicable after making any recommendations, the principal council must—

(a) publish the recommendations; and

(b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of those recommendations.

(8) The principal council must conclude the review within the period of 12 months starting with the day on which the council receives the community governance petition or community governance application.”

These duties are reflected within the Terms of Reference agreed by Committee prior to commencement and must be considered in making a decision.

Section 100(1) of the 2007 Act empowered the Secretary of State to issue guidance as to the carrying out of CGRs. By section 100(4) of the Act, the Council is obliged to have regard to any such guidance issued.

The currently relevant Guidance was published the DCLG in March 2010 (“the Guidance”).

## **Staffing**

30. It will be possible to carry out a Community Governance Review prompted by the new development at Northstowe within existing resources.

## **Risks/Opportunities**

31. Undertaking a Community Governance Review will allow the residents at Northstowe to engage with local democracy and determine how they wish to be represented in future and will assist in the formation of an emergent community identity.

## **Equality and Diversity**

32. The Council will work with relevant Parish Council's to identify and consult with interested parties. Key documents will be available on the SCDC website and on deposit at the District Council offices in Cambourne. They will also be available at The Community Wing, Pathfinder School, Northstowe, The Village Hall, Longstanton, and by request from the Parish Clerk in Oakington. There will be provision for collection of paper submissions at these locations and they will also be accepted online and by post.

## Consultation responses

33. No formal consultation has taken place to date, this will be part of the review process. Briefings have taken place with Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick, Willingham, Over, Cottenham and Swavesey parish councils. Rampton parish council will be briefed at their next meeting on the 4 November 2019. The views of the local members for Longstanton & Oakington have been taken into account.

## A modern and caring Council

34. Appropriate community governance arrangements will help the Council to sustain existing successful, vibrant villages and establish successful and sustainable new communities.

## Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Terms of Reference
- Appendix B: Map of Northstowe Development area and surrounding parishes.
- Appendix C: Map of Oakington boundary
- Appendix D: Map of Over boundary
- Appendix E: Map of Swavesey boundary
- Appendix F: Map of Willingham boundary
- Appendix G: Map of Rampton boundary

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