

REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee

03 March 2020

LEAD OFFICER: Liz Watts, Chief Executive Officer

Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick, prompted by the development at Northstowe; outcomes of the first round of consultation

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 instructed officers to conduct a Community Governance Review in response to the creation of this new community, which commenced 11 November 2019 with the publication of the Terms of Reference for the review.
4. The Committee is now invited to consider the findings of the first stage consultation and recommend the options upon which to consult in the second round of consultation.

Key Decision

5. No.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Civic Affairs Committee
 - (a) Decides which options to put forward to consult upon for the second round of consultation, taking into consideration the likely implications for each of the options.
 - (b) Approves the format of the consultation material and engagement programme for the second round of consultation.
 - (c) Delegates final sign-off of the consultation materials to Clare Gibbons, following comments from the parish councils.

Reasons for Recommendations

7. 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.

8. 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.
9. The consultation to date, as set out in the published Terms of Reference (Appendix A), has invited views from the parish councils (both those immediately involved and those neighbouring) and the communities therein on the following:
 - Parish boundaries.
 - Electoral arrangements.
 - Whether to create a new parish and if so, style, name and number of Councillors.
 - Possible interim arrangements.

Details

10. 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.

11. Civic Affairs Committee agreed (October 2019) to commence a Community Governance Review of the civil parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick, in response to the new development at Northstowe which is being built within the boundaries of these two civil parishes.
12. 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.

13. Furthermore, the guidance states that 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

Timetable for Community Governance Review	
Terms of Reference are published	11 November 2019
Local briefings and meetings	November/December 2019
Initial submissions are invited	From 11 November 2019 to 15 January 2020
Consideration of submissions received, and draft recommendations prepared for Civic Affairs Committee	Draft recommendations published 3 March 2020
Consultation on the draft recommendations	From 15 March to 15 June 2020
Consideration of submissions received, and final recommendations prepared for Civic Affairs Committee	July/August 2020
Final recommendations are published, concluding the review	September 2020
Council can make a Reorganisation Order	October 2020

14. The publication of the terms of reference began the review, which must be completed within twelve months. The review concludes when the council publishes the recommendations made in the review. The Committee, with the support of local parish councils, approved the timeline given in the table above.
15. Officers undertook an extensive programme of community engagement to promote understanding of the objectives of the review and to call for proposals reflecting the community identity and interests of the three settlements directly affected.
16. The review was publicised on our website, through social media channels and in conjunction with the parish councils affected. At commencement of the review, all households in Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick parishes had flyers delivered detailing the engagement programme and inviting participation. Subsequently, at the request of these parish councils, copies of the Terms of Reference and submission form were delivered by parish volunteers to each household.
17. The engagement programme of meetings and briefings covered numerous venues across all three settlements, on different days of the week and at different times, including stalls at community events (x 3); attendance at district councillor surgeries (x2) and a number of drop-in sessions (x7).

18. Some of these dates were added on request during the first round of consultation. Officers also supported three public meetings organised by Longstanton Parish Council, Oakington and Westwick Parish Council and Northstowe residents. An additional meeting was held specifically for Rampton Drift residents, to ensure their views were captured.
19. Officers endeavoured to counteract misinformation widely circulated from early in the consultation period concerning a perceived intent on the part of the district council to merge the villages of Oakington and Longstanton with Northstowe. Reassurances were given that the outcome of the review was not predetermined and that all views were welcome at the first stage in the process.
20. The on-line and paper forms used to gather consultation responses came under criticism. Officers explained that residents were free to answer as they wished and that forms were not designed to extract one particular view, but rather to enable a range of views to be stated, with one format available for all. Some residents felt a form tailored to each community may have been more appropriate. The on-line form was adjusted such that no question was compulsory to allow progression through the submission form.
21. A variety of views, many very detailed, were expressed by members of the public through the consultation process; over 430 submissions were received, with 261 gathered on-line and 169 by paper submission forms.
22. A number of submissions (67) followed a model circulated widely by e-mail within Longstanton village, which argued for retention of land west of the B1050 within Longstanton Civil Parish. A further e-mail originating from the same individual later urged people to state "I do/do not wish for Longstanton to merge with Northstowe" and suggested people may wish to offer a substitute for their earlier submission, but this did not result in retractions. The weight of response which supports the earlier position may in part be attributable to this intervention.
23. The submissions received from parish councils are set out in Appendix B.
24. Longstanton Parish Council did not advance a proposal at this stage, since there were opposing views expressed by the different communities within its parish boundaries – firstly, there were strongly held views (expressed vociferously at a public meeting) that Longstanton must remain a separate village and that some residents of Rampton Drift and Station Road north of the busway identified with Longstanton and would wish to remain within it. However, they also are aware that residents of Northstowe wish to have their own parish or town council and for the land west of the B1050 to be included within its boundary.
25. Oakington Parish Council proposes a new civil parish for Northstowe, incorporating the new housing and with its southern border running in front of the tree line within the green separation between the airfield site and the village of Oakington. They assert that Westwick should remain bound to Oakington. They make no suggestion as to how the boundary should be redrawn within Longstanton Parish to enable creation of the new civil parish for Northstowe.
26. Willingham Parish Council stated its willingness to take land north of the busway into Willingham Civil Parish, but also conceded this land could also become part of a new civil

parish for Northstowe, however they feared this may encourage development north of the busway which Willingham Parish Council would seek to avoid.

27. Rampton Parish Council proposed creation of a new civil parish to serve Northstowe, with the Guided Busway serving as a boundary. They suggested new arrangements should minimise change for the existing parishes.

28. The vast majority of submissions received (over 73%) clearly articulated a desire for the creation of a separate governance arrangement to be made for Northstowe, approximating to the boundaries of the Northstowe development across all three phases and felt strongly that the separate identity and autonomy of the villages ought to be preserved.

29. A range of views were advanced. A summary is provided here, listed as proposals A-E

A1 The entirety of Northstowe (Phases 1, 2, 3A and 3B) is excised from Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick civil parishes to form **a new civil parish for Northstowe**. Westwick remains with Oakington, with all current arrangements for Oakington and Westwick otherwise remaining unaffected. Longstanton parish council retains the same arrangements as currently, within its reduced boundaries. **Land within Longstanton parish north of the guided busway is transferred to Willingham Civil Parish.**

This option attracted the most support from residents from all three settlements, including those living in Northstowe on both sides of the B1050. Residents from Oakington and Longstanton were concerned that the green separation and the Longstanton Conservation Area should fall within their respective parishes and not be transferred to a new civil parish for Northstowe. Many Longstanton residents did not state to which parish the land north of the guided busway should be attributed. Most Rampton Drift residents indicated that although their current ties lie with Longstanton, they acknowledged that their long-term interests rest with Northstowe.

A2 The entirety of Northstowe (Phases 1, 2, 3A and 3B) is excised from Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick civil parishes to form **a new civil parish for Northstowe**. Westwick remains with Oakington, with all current arrangements for Oakington and Westwick otherwise remaining unaffected. Longstanton parish council retains the same arrangements as currently, within its reduced boundaries. As in proposal A1, the new civil parish for Northstowe extends up to the limits of the guided busway, **taking in some land currently within Over Civil Parish**, in order to create a readily identifiable boundary along the minor roads known as Over Road/ Gravel Bridge Road (whereas the current Over Parish Boundary lies along the Swavesey Drain). This would still leave a spit of Over parish south of the Guided Busway.

B The entirety of Northstowe (Phases 1, 2, 3A and 3B) is excised from Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick civil parishes to form **a new civil parish for Northstowe**. Westwick remains with Oakington, with all current arrangements for Oakington and Westwick otherwise remaining unaffected. Longstanton parish council retains the same arrangements as currently, within its reduced boundaries. **Land within Longstanton parish north of the guided busway is taken into the new civil parish for Northstowe.**

C The majority of Phase 1, Phases 2 and 3A are excised from Longstanton Civil Parish and Oakington and Westwick Civil Parish to create **a new civil parish for this part**

of Northstowe, but the Bloor parcel, Phase 3B and other parcels within the Northstowe extension land situated west of the B1050 are retained within Longstanton Civil Parish, along with land north of the guided busway.

Although this proposal gained considerable traction amongst Longstanton residents it appears that there may have been a failure to grasp the full extent of the development west of the B1050, which would result in roughly equal numbers of residents from this part of Northstowe remaining within Longstanton Civil Parish, as from Longstanton village itself. Although a warding arrangement could potentially resolve this, it would result in an even balance of power between the interests of Northstowe and the interests of Longstanton. Responses from Northstowe residents emphasised that it was important to them for the new town to have a single, unifying arrangement and must not be split between two parishes in any new arrangement.

D The no change scenario.

Some consultation forms were returned requesting that no change be made to the existing parish arrangements. For the most part it is perhaps necessary to interpret that in such instances residents were expressing a desire for their village to remain separate from Northstowe, both physically and in terms of governance, rather than to incorporate the forthcoming development within their existing arrangements. None of these responses suggested any alterations to warding, numbers of parish councillors etc that would indicate that they anticipated change would result to their current arrangements if Northstowe continued to develop within the existing parish boundaries.

E The full merger scenario.

A very small number of responses (3) welcomed the prospect of a governance merger between the three settlements.

The design of the new town, in response to previous community consultation, has severely restricted the extent of vehicular access planned between the existing villages and Northstowe, although connectivity by sustainable modes across the areas of green separation is allowed for. The physical separation between the three settlements could therefore hinder their administration as a single entity. Furthermore, the majority emphasised the separate and distinctive community identity and interests of the three main settlements.

30. Given the lack of overall support for proposals D and E, officers cannot support their inclusion in the next consultation round. The proposals listed as A to C may warrant further consultation; these are presented in map form as corresponding Options A1, A2, B and C within Appendix C.
31. Consultation material has been prepared to be used in the second round of consultation and can be tailored according to the options selected by Civic Affairs Committee on which to further consult. The submission form has been drafted with the intention of further testing (paper and on-line version) to ensure it is “user-friendly” prior to launch with input from the parish councils of Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick.
32. The draft engagement programme is given in Appendix E; this includes a range of opportunities across various days and times, including venues in all three settlements.
33. The Committee will be mindful of 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. 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.

34. The Committee may also wish to note that should early elections take place (in 2021) for any newly formed parish, early elections will also be necessary in any parish that undergoes substantive change to its boundary as an outcome of the review. This could involve the parishes of Over, Willingham, Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick, dependent on the option ultimately selected, as well as any newly created parish which may result.

Consequential Amendments and District Electoral Review

35. 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. New county council division boundaries also came into effect in 2017.
36. 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.
37. When the district ward boundaries were last adjusted, some allowance was made for population growth, such that the ratio of electors to members within Longstanton Ward, incorporating growth at Northstowe, need not necessarily be made immediately. For options A1 and A2, which would see land north of the busway transferred to Willingham, a change in the boundary would be necessitated.
38. With respect to county divisions, the county division of Longstanton, Northstowe and Over may need adjustment, should land be transferred to Willingham Civil Parish under Option A1 and A2, as it currently follows the boundaries of Oakington and Westwick, Longstanton and Over civil parishes. As noted in paragraph 36, application could be made to the LGBCE to bring about this change.
39. The committee may wish to note that several of the options, would necessitate the creation of new administrative polling districts. This will be necessary in order to enable elections to be run in those areas that will be electing different ward and division members to the rest of their parish. Such arrangements will need to remain in place until such time boundaries are re-aligned.
40. The committee should also be aware that the parliamentary constituency boundary between South Cambridgeshire and South East Cambridgeshire constituencies runs along the current Over and Willingham parish boundary with Longstanton. There is no

mechanism to seek realignment of constituency boundaries, which means this arrangement with separate polling districts may persist for some time.

Options

41. The Committee could resolve to
 - (a) consult on all the alternative arrangements proposed through the first round of consultation or
 - (b) narrow down the number to be put back out to public consultation with reasons given.
 - (c) approve the format of the consultation material and engagement programme for the second round (found in appendices D and E respectively), subject to reasonable adjustments following comment from the parish councils involved. The lead officer requests delegated authority to sign off on this material.

Implications

42. 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

43. 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. As per paragraph 35, there may also be a cost to other parishes in holding out of turn elections. However, there are s106 developer contributions to draw upon, in the event that
 - a. Parish council elections outside of the scheduled elections cycle are needed and
 - b. Resources are required to establish a new civil parish.

Legal

44. 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

45. It will be possible to continue implementing the Community Governance Review prompted by the new development at Northstowe within existing resources; however, due to the requirement to engage with the public outside of normal office hours, careful

management of officer time will be necessary to ensure adequate resourcing in the face of competing priorities.

Risks/Opportunities

46. 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

47. The Council will work with relevant Parish Councils 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. The public engagement programme will be designed to enable input from anyone who wishes to give their view, held at a variety of locations and across different times of day.

A modern and caring Council

48. 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: Responses from Parish Councils to the first round of consultation
- Appendix C: Maps of Option A1 A2, B and C
- Appendix D: Draft submission form, second round of consultation
- Appendix E: Draft public engagement programme, second round of consultation

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