

REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee
LEAD OFFICER: Head of Legal and Democratic Services

5 December 2013

Northstowe Community Governance Review

Purpose

1. To update Civic Affairs Committee with regard to progress in relation to the Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe Boundary Review.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Committee approves to leave the current boundary between Longstanton and Oakington in place until such time as there are 1000 electors within the Northstowe DFD Framework outline – see (6) (d) below.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. Early findings have already demonstrated that changes to the existing Longstanton and Oakington parish boundaries in order to accommodate Northstowe, could be highly contentious. Locally, there are very different opinions as to changing boundary lines, the timing of those changes, and the setting up of a stand alone parish/town council for Northstowe. Notwithstanding the differences in opinions regarding the boundary changes, there is also scepticism over the timescale of Northstowe being fully built out.

Background

4. As verbally reported to Civic Affairs Committee in September 2013, Officers were in the process of having informal discussions with Longstanton and Oakington Parish Councils, and organising public drop-in sessions to informally discuss potential boundary changes to Longstanton and Oakington in light of the Northstowe development.

Considerations

5. There have already been a number of suggestions put forward by Oakington and Westwick Parish Council and local residents that have attended the public events to-date;

(i) Oakington and Westwick Parish Council - Phased Boundary Change for Oakington:

Oakington and Westwick Parish Council's view is to leave the Longstanton/Oakington boundary line as it is until such time as the build out reaches Oakington. Once it does, phase the parish boundary changes to be triggered by planning permission for each phase in Oakington – essentially a phased boundary change plan could be agreed by Civic Affairs Committee, which clearly sets out trigger points for changes as well as location of new boundary lines thus avoiding the need for lengthy consultations each time the boundary needs to change. The legal process to change the boundary line would still need to be followed, however, so this could prove time

consuming if the Oakington phases come forward in a piecemeal way. There would also be distinct disadvantages with the new residents of Northstowe (and new parish/town council) having a disjointed and fragmented town to administer.

We will be including this suggestion when we hold the public drop-in on 30th November to seek the views of local residents in Oakington. Oakington Parish Council has not made any comment in relation to the part of Northstowe that is in Longstanton parish.

(ii) Longstanton Parish Council continue to consider its view; we anticipate a formal response in December 2013.

(iii) The following three suggestions are the views of local residents that have attended Drop-Ins, Longstanton Parish Council meeting and emailed their views to SCDC:

(a) Stand Alone Northstowe Parish/Town Council:

Set up a stand alone Northstowe Parish/Town Council immediately, using the DFD framework outline as the new boundary, with consideration to the inclusion (or not) of parts of Longstanton Conservation Area. This would be possible because the residents of Rampton Drift would be living within the new Northstowe boundary, but also any local resident could stand for election to the new parish providing they live within 3 miles of the parish. This is the suggestion to date that is most disputed and least favoured by parishes and residents. It would, however, be the most cost effective suggestion but the risk to reputation and local community feeling could outweigh any financial benefits.

(b) Phased Boundary Change for Longstanton:

Use a phased approach for the boundary changes as each phase of Northstowe is granted permission: use Phase 1 outline for the initial Northstowe boundary, then Phase 2, then Phase 3, and so on until all phases have been included into the new parish of Northstowe (see attached map). Although a phased approach within Longstanton could be agreed with clearly set out triggers, this could prove costly and require large amounts of resources depending on timings of phases coming forward. As with (a) above, the legal process to change the boundary line would still need to be followed, however, so this could prove time consuming if the Longstanton phases come forward in a piecemeal way. There would also be the same disadvantages as previously mentioned with the new residents of Northstowe (and new parish/town council) having a disjointed and fragmented town to administer. There is a small amount of support for this suggestion within Longstanton.

(c) Incorporate Northstowe into Longstanton:

Incorporate Northstowe into Longstanton, and provide extra seats on Longstanton Parish Council and extra support to Longstanton Parish Council for planning and administering Northstowe as it progresses – a sort of ‘Longstanton cum Northstowe’. This suggestion could link well with (a) above given it may well take 10 – 15 years for Northstowe to build out towards Oakington so that any agreed phased parish boundary changes are timed with Northstowe planning applications as they move into Oakington parish.

This suggestion would give a greater say to existing residents in Longstanton at the current time, but would also provide opportunities for new residents moving in to 'Northstowe' to decide for themselves whether or not they would like to have their own governance arrangements as Northstowe develops over time. Again there is a small amount of support for this suggestion within Longstanton.

Options

6. Given the lack of a clear way forward for any boundary changes at the current time, either in terms of the location of any new boundary or the timing of any changes, Officers believe a further suggestion could be added:

(d) Review Boundary Changes at 1000 Electors:

Make no boundary changes at this time but agree via Civic Affairs Committee to revisit the boundary review once there are 1000 registered electors within the Northstowe DFD Framework outline. This would be the trigger for establishing a Northstowe Parish Council, based on the legislation for the number of residents there needs to be for a parish council to be created. This suggestion would give existing local residents opportunities to understand better how Northstowe is going to progress, both in relation to building houses but also in managing and administering the development. Extra seats for Longstanton Parish Council could be created so that new residents would have opportunities to be involved in influencing how Northstowe progresses through existing Parish Councils before needing to take on their own governance arrangements, and the Parish Councils and local residents would have further reassurances of the long term commitment to the Northstowe development. Again extra support could be provided to Longstanton Parish Council.

There are four more public events to capture early suggestions as regards boundary changes in Longstanton and Oakington.

- Saturday 30th November 2013 – Oakington Pavilion – 10 am – 12 noon
- Saturday 14th December 2013 – Rampton Drift meeting at Longstanton – 10 am – 12 noon
- Saturday 18th January 2014 – Oakington Pavilion – 10 am – 12 noon
- Saturday 25th January 2014 – Longstanton Village Institute Hall – 10 am – 12 noon

Implications

7. 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

8. There will be no associated costs at this time if there is agreement to review any boundary changes at 1000 registered electors.

Legal

9. Compliance with the 2007 Act and associated guidance will help avoid challenge to the process or the outcome.

Staffing

10. It is expected that continued engagement with local residents in and around the Northstowe DFD Framework Outline can be carried out within existing staff resources in New Communities and legal.

Risk Management

11. There are no significant implications

Equality and Diversity

12. There are no significant implications

Climate Change

13. There are no significant implications

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

14. No formal consultations have taken place at this time. The Youth Council will be consulted early in 2014.

Background Papers: None

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