



## SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 26.11.12

### COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 What is a community governance review?

- 1.1.1 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Cheltenham Borough Council has the power to carry out a community governance review (CGR). A CGR is a review of the whole or part of the Council's area to consider creating parish councils; reviewing and changing parish council boundaries and in extreme cases, abolishing parish councils. It can also consider the electoral arrangements for parish council including the year of election, the number of councillors to be elected and any warding of the parish.
- 1.1.2 A CGR has been requested by 3 of our parish councils to look at some changes to their current boundaries. It is considered good practice to conduct a review every 10-15 years and the last review in Cheltenham was carried out in 2002.
- 1.1.3 The Communities and Local Government department guidance on community governance reviews states that a CGR should bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services. The Council must ensure that community governance in the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and is effective and convenient. The Council must consult local government electors in the areas affected by the review and other people and bodies which appear to the Council to have an interest in it.

##### 1.2 What does a parish council do?

- 1.2.1 Parish councils are the most local form of government and there are 5 in Cheltenham. They collect money from council tax payers, known as the precept, and this is used to improve services in the area. This is usually in the region of £10 per household **per year** for a band D property in Cheltenham. Parish councillors are elected and do not receive remuneration for their services. The role of the parish council is to represent the local community; provide services to meet local needs and improve quality of life and community wellbeing. For example, they might provide or maintain allotments, community centres, bus shelters, seats, signs, notice boards, parks and open spaces. They liaise with borough and county councils and other service providers and have a significant input to planning, being statutory consultees for planning applications.

- 1.2.2 Through the Localism Act, more power is being passed down from central government to local communities and parish councils are being given more powers to help them do more to support their community. This includes playing a role to help sustain local services which other public sector bodies can no longer afford to provide.

## **2. WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?**

### **2.1 The task group**

- 2.1.1 A Scrutiny task group was set up following the elections in May and the first meeting was held on 22 June. The members are:

Councillor Barbara Driver

Councillor Klara Sudbury (attended one meeting)

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council: Cllr Adrian Mears and Amanda Winstone (clerk)

Charlton Kings Parish Council: Cllr Reg Beagley, Cllr Mike Palmer and Tony Potts (clerk)

Up Hatherley Parish Council: Cllr Stuart Fowler and Cllr David Hall

Officers: Jane Griffiths, Richard Gibson, Hannah Wright, Helen Down

- 2.1.2 Other elected members were initially involved but withdrew.

- 2.1.3 The group scoped the review in terms of the areas under review and how the review would be carried out, including plans for consultation.

- 2.3.2 The parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill and Up Hatherley are taking part in the review and are represented on the task group. Prestbury and Swindon Parish Councils are satisfied with their boundaries internal to Cheltenham borough.

## **3. WHAT ARE WE PROPOSING?**

### **3.1 The areas under review**

- 3.1.1 We are proposing to consult with residents in the proposed consultation areas shown on the map (on page 3 of appendix 1 – the draft consultation document) as follows:

- Up Hatherley Parish Council has asked for the area bounded by Alma Road, Hatherley Road and Windermere Road to be consulted with a view to the area becoming part of Up Hatherley Parish Council. This is a small area with links with Up Hatherley.
- It has been suggested that since The Reddings was previously part of Badgeworth Parish Council, that residents there be consulted about whether they would like to become parished and if so, whether there is appetite to set up a new parish council or whether they would like to become a ward of Up Hatherley Parish Council represented by 4 councillors.

- Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council has asked for the area between Shurdington Road and Leckhampton Road up to the Norwood Arms and the Pilley area to be consulted. There is a desire for a mutual boundary to be formed between Leckhampton with Warden Hill and Charlton Kings Parish Councils.
  - The working group suggests that the remainder of the Warden Hill borough ward be consulted (the area around Bournside School shown in the map which is appendix B with a view to it becoming part of Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council if there is support.
  - The group also suggests consulting with the Naunton Park area, to see if residents there would like to join Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council.
  - Charlton Kings has asked for the roads off Sandy Lane to be consulted, along with Charlton Park, the small area on the unparished side of Oakley Road and the area including the old GCHQ buildings as these areas are thought to be seen as part of Charlton Kings but are not included within the current parish council boundary.
- 3.1.2 Due to the costs involved in printing and distributing the consultation document, the group proposes to consult only the residents within the consultation areas shown. We are not proposing to consult with residents within the existing parish council boundaries.
- 3.1.3 We are not proposing to consult the whole borough because there has not been any indication of other areas wanting to become parished. The details of the review will be made public on the website however, and all feedback generated will be considered.
- 3.1.4 The impact on the electorates for the 3 parish councils based on the proposals is estimated to be:  
 Charlton Kings – from 8110 electors to 8957 plus potential development on the GCHQ Oakley site.  
 Leckhampton with Warden Hill – from 3803 electors to 9947 plus potential development.  
 Up Hatherley – from 4775 electors to approx 5622  
 The Reddings – 1988 electors (either a separate parish council or added to Up Hatherley's total)
- 3.1.5 We must also take into consideration any change in the number or distribution of electors which is likely to take place over the next five years. Planning assumptions and likely growth within the area, based on planning permissions granted and local plans should be used to project an accurate electorate forecast.
- 3.1.6 The overlay with the borough wards is attached as appendix 2. Where an area crosses into a separate borough ward, this will need to form a parish ward.

**QUESTION FOR SCRUTINY:**

- **Do you feel that our approach as outlined above is correct?**

## 3.2 How will we consult?

- 3.2.1 One copy of the consultation document (attached as appendix 2) will be sent to each household in the consultation areas shown. The questionnaire will not be available online (to reduce the likelihood of multiple responses), but the review will be publicised on the council's website and an email address for sending comments to will be provided. A public meeting in each parish council area plus the Reddings will be held during the consultation phase in January.
- 3.2.2 We also have a duty to consult other people or bodies which have an interest in the review and to inform Gloucestershire County Council.
- 3.2.3 As a principle, we will include both sides of a road in the consultation areas and seek to draw any new boundary lines in this way rather than using the middle of roads.
- 3.2.4 The questionnaire asks households whether they agree with the proposal for their area to be included within one of the parish council areas. For the Reddings, residents will be asked whether they want to become parished, and if so, whether they would be in favour of setting up a new parish council or joining with Up Hatherley.
- 3.2.5 Given that we will be consulting with so many local residents, we also propose to take the opportunity to ask some questions related to community building, to find out more about community activities that residents are involved in and whether they would like to do more.

### Question for Scrutiny:

- Do you agree with this suggested approach to consultation?

## 3.3 What are the costs?

- 3.3.1 The group has researched the most cost effective way of carrying out the review and the estimated costs are as follows, based on consulting with roughly 7000 households that are in the consultation areas:

- Cost of printing and folding 7000 questionnaires £1221
- Cost of printing freepost envelopes and packing £641
- Cost of freepost license £200 (this may be less)
- Cost of hand delivery by elections canvassers £1610 (23p per household)
- Cost of freepost returns dependent on returns
- TOTAL £3672 (+ freepost returns)**

- 3.3.2 The cost will be met from £2300 which was carried forward from 2011/12 underspend as set out in the Budget out turn report that went to Council in June. The remainder will be met from the Commissioning Division's printing budget.

**Question for Scrutiny:**

- **Options for reducing the costs would be to leave Naunton Park (approximately 1328 households) and / or the Reddings (approximately 1130 homes) out of the consultation. Do members feel this is justified?**

**3.4 How will the results be analysed and how will decisions be made?**

- 3.4.1 The results will be analysed in house using Microsoft Excel. We have used multiple choice answers for ease of analysis, although a comments box has also been included.
- 3.4.2 Only questionnaires with the address included on them will be considered and this is made clear in the document. This is so that we can break the results down into post code areas in order to draw any potential new boundaries from them.
- 3.4.3 We propose that more than 50% of responses in favour per post code area will mean that that area should become part of the parish council area. Where there is a clear response (50% or more of the responses received) from a particular street or post code area against the proposal, we will seek to leave that area outside the revised parish boundary, unless there is support from areas all around it which would mean there was a small 'hole' in the parished area. The aim will be to create the best boundary with 50% or more of the votes inside it being in favour. For the Reddings, there would need to be enough streets in favour for the option of setting up a new parish council to be viable. For the smaller consultation areas, it may be sensible to take an overall percentage so that the whole area is counted as in favour or not in favour. The results will be presented back to Overview and Scrutiny.
- 3.4.4 After taking a decision as to the extent to which it will give effect to recommendations made in the CGR, the Council must publish its decision and the reasons for it and make sure that those with an interest are informed.

**Question for Scrutiny:**

- **Do you agree with the approach to analysis suggested above?**
- **What level of return per consultation area would be statistically sound?**

**3.5 What are the timescales?**

A CGR must be completed within 12 months of starting it. The proposed timescales are:

17 December 2012	Report to Council for approval to go out to consultation
w/c 7 January 2013	Consultation starts (questionnaires delivered)
1 February 2013	Consultation closes
May 2013	Draft proposals presented to Scrutiny and Council for agreement to publish for consultation
30 June 2013	Last date for submissions
July 2013	Final proposals presented to Council and CGR order published.
1 April 2014	CGR order takes effect
May 2014	Parish council elections, using any new boundaries

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 In conclusion, the scrutiny task group asks Overview and Scrutiny to consider the questions in the body of this paper and to respond to the following recommendation:

- To undertake a Community Governance Review as detailed above and in the consultation document, including the Reddings, Naunton Park and the unparished parts of Warden Hill ward.

#### **5. APPENDICES**

- Draft consultation document
- Map of proposed consultation areas overlaid with borough ward boundaries
- Covering report to Council and risk assessment

The guidance on community governance reviews from Communities and Local Government can be found here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1527635.pdf>