

Lacey Green and Bledlow cum Saunderton Community Governance Review

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Wards affected: All

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

1. Further to the consultation that has been completed as part of the community governance review in the parishes of Lacey Green and Bledlow cum Saunderton, that a minor change to the parish boundary be made to move three properties from the parish of Lacey Green to the parish of Bledlow cum Saunderton.
2. To make a formal request to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for a consequential amendment to the ward boundaries between Bledlow and Bradenham and Lacey Green, Speen and the Hampdens District Wards based on the defined Parish amendment

Executive Summary

1. Wycombe District Council, as principal council, agreed in July 2018 to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) to amend the electoral arrangements of the parish council(s). The review was subsequently commenced with the publication of the Terms of Reference and a consultation of local residents and other interested parties in the relevant parishes.
2. Any changes agreed to the electoral arrangements will be effective from the next full parish elections. These are currently scheduled for May 2019, however in light of the MHCLG announcement on 1 November 2018 for the creation of a single Unitary District Council for the whole of Buckinghamshire with effect from 1 April 2020, the parish elections may be moved.
3. Lacey Green Parish Council, owners of two properties and a land owner on the boundary between Lacey Green and Bledlow Cum Saunderton Parish Councils requested that the properties be moved from Lacey Green Parish Council to Bledlow Cum Saunderton. If agreed, this will require a consequential request being made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to amend the ward boundary accordingly.

Corporate Implications

4. The Local Government and public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables a principal authority to carry out a Community Governance Review of the electoral arrangements of the parishes within its area.

Financial Implications:

5. There is no specific budget for CGRs. The full cost must be met by the District Council as there is no power to recharge to a parish council or any other council.
6. Due to the size of the review the cost has been minimal with the only expenditure the cost of printing, postage and officers time. Emails have been sent where possible to save on postage costs.

Equalities Implications

7. Improvement of the electoral arrangements for the parish communities.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

8. The arrangements for elections underpin all the Council's activities and priorities.

Background and Issues

9. A principal council may not carry out a review of its ward boundaries, as this is the responsibility of the Boundary Commission for England. However the electoral arrangements of a parish council may be altered by a principal council as the result of a CGR either as a result of a petition, or at the request of the parish council itself or a local member.
10. The decision to amend parish electoral arrangements cannot be taken by a principal council without undertaking a CGR. A principal council does have the authority to refuse to undertake a CGR if it feels there would be absolutely no benefit to the community by such a review, but in the majority of cases, a review will be undertaken, even if the outcome of the review is to make no changes.

Consultation

11. The consultation period ran for three weeks from Monday 8 October until Monday 29 October.
12. Notice of the review were published formally on Monday 8 October at the council offices and could be found on the website at

<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/About-the-council/Elections-and-voting/Community-governance-reviews.aspx>

13. Altogether eight individual letters were sent to residents of three properties that the change would affect. Emails were sent to the parishes of Lacey Green and Bledlow cum Saunderton. and to the district councillors that represent the areas of Lacey Green, Speen and the Hampdens, which the parish of Lacey Green is situated and Bledlow and Bradenham, which the parish of Bledlow cum Saunderton is situated.
14. Two responses were received, both by email:
15. Cllr Miv Hughes (Lacey Green Parish Council) also resident of property that would be affected by the CGR

It was I who instigated the requested to move the boundary in 2016 to include the small number of properties concerned into Bledlow and Saunderton Parish. and the process was begun but abandoned when talk of the unitary authority was raised.

Our address is xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. Likewise, the other two properties and a field between us and xxxxxxxx House, is similarly affected.

Obviously, the original boundary was there long before the road was built, but the road having been built, it effectively cuts the west side of the parish off from the remainder, and, looking at the line of the boundary as it exists, re-aligning it with the A4010 would be a sensible move.

The residents concerned were all consulted at the time it was first suggested, and it was discovered that none of the residents actually have any involvement with the Parish of Lacey Green, it is merely an administrative boundary, so it was deemed a sensible move.

The other consideration was the potential new Parliamentary boundary changes, which would put Lacey Green into a Parliamentary constituency with Amersham and Chesham-both very much more urban than the rural nature of the surrounding countryside.

Moving the parish boundary will put the properties concerned into the Wycombe Parliamentary constituency which preserves the status quo.

16. John Hughes – Resident of property affected by CGR

Thank you for your letter of 9 October regarding Lacey Green PC's request to move part of the parish boundary to allow three properties, including Ridgeway Lodge, to be re-placed in Bledlow-cum-Saunderton parish.

I fully support the proposal as shown on the map you supplied. It has long seemed an anachronism to me that the present parish boundary has not been updated from historic positions. The re-placement proposed would more accurately reflect present community settings as well as physical features that clearly demark the boundaries.

Options

17. The Council is obliged to decide formally whether or not to approve the request.

Next Steps

18. If agreed, a Reorganisation Order will be made for the parishes and a formal request to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for a consequential amendment to the ward boundaries will be made. Any changes will become effective from the next full parish elections in May 2019 (if the parish elections do not go ahead the effective date will be reconsidered).

Appendices

Appendix A – Map of proposed change