

# **Report to the Council**

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 7 June 2010

**Subject:** Community Governance Review – Greensted Ward of Ongar Town Council

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Mrs D Collins  
(Leader of Council)

**Item:** 10(a)

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## **Recommendation:**

**That a community governance review in respect of the Greensted Ward of Ongar Town Council be not pursued for the following reasons:**

- (a) the representations made for the proposed transfer of the Greensted Parish Ward of Ongar Town to the Parish of Stanford Rivers do not, basis of, make a strong enough case for reflecting the identities and interests of residents of that the ward more effectively and conveniently than the present arrangements;**
  - (b) the case presented does not provide a convincing justification for concluding that the concerns expressed by Greensted residents and in particular those from Greensted Green will be better served by transferring the ward to a different Parish Council; and**
  - (c) the absence of any view expressed by Stanford Rivers Parish Council.**
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## **Report:**

1. At the Council meeting on 3 November 2009 (Minute 91(a)), the Council adopted the following motion:

"That this Council –

- (a) notes the powers available to the District Council under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct corporate governance reviews within the District, including arrangements for Parish Councils;
- (b) notes that such reviews are designed to ensure that community governance is reflective of the identities and interests of the community in an area and is effective and convenient;
- (c) notes that concerns have been expressed by residents of Greensted Parish Ward in the Ongar Town Council area that they have more affinity with surrounding rural parishes than the Town of Ongar;
- (d) asks the Cabinet, or such other member body as has been established to deal with such reviews, to carry out reviews of the following:
  - (i) the current Parish Council boundary in the Greensted area;
  - (ii) whether the Greensted area would be better included in an adjoining rural parish;

- (iii) whether there are any residential areas more suitable by reason for their inherent character to remain part of Ongar Parish;
- (iv) consequential arrangements to Parish Council warding and polling arrangements arising from any changes agreed; and
- (v) consequential changes to District Council boundaries and warding arrangements arising from those changes."

2. This motion now stood referred to the Cabinet for consideration and we considered this at our meeting on 7 June 2010.

### **Community Governance Review – Procedure**

3. Details of the review procedures are set out in the separate report on the proposed governance review relating to Moreton, Bobbingworth and The Lavers Parish Council.

### **The Scope of the Proposed Review**

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4. The map at Appendix 1 shows the Greensted ward, which is a westward extension of the Ongar Town Council area. The parish ward contains electors of which are situated in the parts of Ongar Town adjoining the Marden Ash area.
  5. Apart from the area adjoining the Town of Ongar proper, the Greensted Parish Ward is rural in character, being similar to the adjoining parishes of Moreton, Bobbingworth and The Lavers and Stanford Rivers. The proposal is to embark on a community governance review with the objective of considering whether Greensted should become part of Stanford Rivers Parish Council on grounds of community interest.
  6. At the last review of District Wards in 2002, the inclusion of Greensted in a District Ward linked to Ongar (known as Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash Ward) was debated on much the same basis now. The then Local Government Boundary Commission took the view that their policy precluded the proposal because the Parish Council boundaries were compromised.

### **Electoral Arrangements**

#### **Greensted Ward**

7. This parish ward is within Ongar Town Parish. The parish is situated in the Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash District Ward and the Ongar and Rural County Division.

#### **Stanford Rivers Parish**

8. Stanford Rivers Parish has no parish wards. The parish is situated within the Passingford District Ward and the Ongar and Rural County Division.

### **Election Cycle**

9. The election cycle for this area is as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Election(s) Due</b>
2011	Ongar Town Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash District Ward

2012            Stanford Rivers Parish Council  
Moreton, Bobbingworth and The Lavers Parish Council  
District Ward of Passingford

2013    Ongar and Rural County Electoral Division

10.    If Greensted Ward were to transfer to Stanford Rivers Parish, this would cross District ward boundaries and lead to the Boundary Committee for England making corresponding changes to the District wards. The most likely scenario is that the new parish and District wards would not take effect until 2015, the next ordinary elections.
11.    All boundary changes would need to be achieved so as to avoid confusing voters.

### **The Review**

These would include:

- (a)    an assessment of local opinion in Greensted;
- (b)    an assessment of community links and effective and convenient arrangements for the area; and
- (c)    where a new boundary between Ongar Town and Greensted should be.

and proposals which would emerge from the Initial Consultation might be:

- (a)    new parish warding arrangements for Stanford Rivers Parish Council, Ongar Town;
- (b)    new district warding arrangements affecting those areas ;
- (c)    a review of polling stations (due in 2011 anyway); and
- (d)    definition of a new parish boundary between Ongar Town and Greensted near Marden Ash.

### **Consultation**

12.    Both Ongar Town Council and the local residents have conducted their own informal soundings. We have received summaries of this data which can be read as part of the Returning Officer's report on our agenda on 7 June 2010.
13.    Neither of these surveys can be regarded as meeting the statutory requirement for consultation. This falls to the Council to conduct and will have to be carried out in a planned manner.
14.    Ongar Town Council has also commented to the District Council and we have considered its views and a statement on behalf of Greensted Green residents. We took these into account in deciding whether to launch the review and balancing the often conflicting comments made. These are set out in Appendices 2 and 3 attached.
15.    We received presentations from Ongar Town council, the Greensted Green residents and Moreton, bobbinworth & The Lavers Parish Council but no comments were received from Stanford Rivers Parish Council.

## **Conclusions**

We were asked to consider whether there is a case for a review and the launch of stage one of the statutory consultation. Our conclusions on this are set out in our recommendation.