

**PARISH REVIEW WORKING PARTY HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN AT 10.00AM ON 9 MAY 2006**

Present:- Councillors E J Godwin, A J Ketteridge and M J Savage
Officers in attendance:- P Snow

PRWP3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2006, were received, confirmed and signed as a correct record.

PRWP4 PARISH REVIEW

The Electoral Services Officer presented a detailed report on the outcome of the stage two consultation of the Parish Review. He invited the Working Party to reach a conclusion on the basis of the evidence submitted and to formulate a recommendation to the East Area Panel meeting on 23 May. The Panel had been given delegated power to determine the Council's proposals to the Secretary of State on whether a new parish should be established at Oakwood Park from part of the parish of Little Dunmow.

He asked Members first to look at the principle of whether there should be a new parish, on the basis of the criteria set out in the report relating to the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants. The outcome of the consultation showed that a response had been received from about 46% of electors in the existing parish. Of those responding at Oakwood Park, some 70% favoured the creation of a new parish, and the corresponding figure in the village of Little Dunmow was a little under 77%. The number of people at Oakwood Park in favour of separation now represented more than 33% of the voting population, with a similar proportion in the parish as a whole.

Members agreed, in principle, that there was an overwhelming case in favour of recommending a new parish on the basis of the results achieved. Oakwood Park was seen as both separate and different in community terms and Members felt that these differences were unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future.

The meeting then turned to consideration of the name of the new parish. The consultation had been conducted on the basis that the parish would be entitled Oakwood Park as this was the commonly used and accepted title for the development. However, Oakwood Park was a marketing name devised by the developer, was thought to have no local connection, and was not part of the postal address of any of the properties.

The newly formed Oakwood Park Residents Association (OPRA) had suggested either Flitch Green or Tile End as alternatives as both had local connections to the site specifically, or to the parish generally. They had canvassed opinion at Oakwood Park within the last three weeks and had obtained opinions from 161 local residents. The outcome was a vote heavily in favour of the name 'Flitch Green' by some 63% of those expressing a view.

Members took the view that Oakwood Park was a contrived name that did not identify the location and that the adoption of an alternative was desirable. The evidence of strong support for the name Flich Green was encouraging and Members were inclined to support this name unless it could be shown that there was a possibility of confusion with similar names in the Great Dunmow area.

It was noted that the new parish council would be able to request a change of name under Section 75 of the Local Government Act. However, there was a preference to resolve the matter at the outset to minimise the potential for confusion in the longer term.

The Working Party then turned to consideration of the parish boundary. Again, the consultation was carried out on the basis that the development limits of Oakwood Park would form the boundary but with the proviso that other suggestions would be considered. OPRA had raised the possibility of incorporating the nature reserve site south-east of the site, but adjoining it on the east side of Stebbing Brook.

Management of the site had been included in the 1998 planning agreement and it was now owned and managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust. Access to the nature reserve was available to local residents either on foot or by cycle. This meant that it could be regarded as part of the Oakwood Park site and opened the possibility of including the nature reserve as part of the new parish.

On balance, Members felt that this was unnecessary as the cost of managing the reserve would not fall upon the parish council and local residents would continue to have access in any event.

Members next considered the electoral arrangements that should be adopted. These would be needed, both in the interim before a new parish could be established, and for the new parish and the revised parish of Little Dunmow. There was overall agreement that the options identified in the report were suitable and should be adopted. The Electoral Services Officer said that a warding scheme would have become necessary in the existing parish if no boundary changes were being proposed as part of this review.

There was some discussion about the arrangements that should be made to secure the future financing and administration of the new parish. It was felt that a mentoring period was needed so that new parish councillors could be made aware of their functions as well as likely limitations on their powers and the standards of probity to which they would be made a party. Members considered that these objectives could be achieved if some residents from Oakwood Park were able to serve as parish councillors in the existing parish in the interim period before the new parish was formed.

Consideration was then given to the future of this group in relation to electoral matters generally. It was agreed that the role of the Working Group could include a close involvement in setting the new parish's initial precept and

helping to provide training opportunities for new parish councillors, as well as matters such as the review of polling districts and places, and the consideration of parish electoral arrangements generally.

The ability of a small member group, such as this one, to respond quickly to events, as well as to give in depth consideration to matters of detail, was seen as being of benefit to the authority.

RECOMMENDED to the East Area Panel that:

1. the Council propose to the Secretary of State the creation of a new parish formed from that part of the parish of Little Dunmow comprising the Oakwood Park development;
2. the new parish should be named Flitch Green;
3. the boundary of the new parish be established as described in detail in paragraph 33 of the report to this meeting, that is, following the development limits of Oakwood Park, but excluding the nature reserve land;
4. during the interim period before the new parish is created, the number of parish councillors in Little Dunmow be adjusted, by order, to 11, with effect from the ordinary election of parish councillors in May 2007 (and from such earlier date as is required for all other purposes in connection with that election), provided that the new parish council does not begin to operate from that date;
5. the following electoral arrangements be agreed for the new and revised parishes, with no division into wards: Flitch Green, nine parish councillors; and Little Dunmow, seven parish councillors; and
6. the Council make suitable arrangements for the financial and administrative needs of the new parish council in due course.

RECOMMENDED to the Operations Committee that the Parish Review Working Party be retained beyond the life of this parish review for the purpose of advising the Committee (or the relevant Area Panel) on electoral matters generally, including the conduct of statutory reviews.

The meeting ended at 12.00 Noon