

Kidlington Parish Council Chair's report November 2021

Kidlington residents may have been a little surprised to receive a consultation letter from Cherwell District Council asking for their views on a possible merger between Kidlington and Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Councils (KPC and GWE). This is not a proposal that we have initiated out of the blue. It is our response to Cherwell's request for submissions to the Governance Review that they are currently undertaking.

Given that the proposed change would have little day-to-day impact on our residents, we did not think we could justify the cost of sending them a special newsletter on the subject--though GWE have sent one to their residents. We have however put a page on our website giving the reasons for our position. I will take the opportunity to run through the arguments here.

Kidlington currently has more than 14,000 residents, GWE about 1,400. Most of the homes in GWE are in the triangle between the two Bicester Roads and the main Oxford Road (P on the consultation letter map below). For all practical purposes this area is part of Kidlington. It includes Gosford Hill, the school where most Kidlington children study, and its residents mostly use KPC facilities. The rest of GWE consists of a small number of houses to the East of the North-South Bicester link road, though the number of houses will increase very considerably with the new developments that are currently planned by Cherwell District Council.

We think it is in residents' interests that the two parishes should merge for the following reasons:

- the current division between the two parishes is a historical accident which no longer has any real justification;
- we would all benefit practically and financially from the sharing of facilities and staff;
- most importantly, a merged council would be larger and stronger, and thus better placed to represent residents' interests, and in particular to resist the further encroachments on the Green Belt that are threatened;
- new housing developments in GWE will add 1790 new houses to the parish; a large and strong council would be better placed to deal with the problems and issues that will arise as a result of such a huge increase in population;
- KPC's council tax charge to residents is slightly higher than GWE's: currently just over £27 a year more for a Band D property. This is because KPC provides most of the facilities for both parishes. In contrast, GWE has very few facilities of its own.
- Two GWE councillors are also KPC councillors so we already work very closely together – this proposal would formalise and strengthen that arrangement.

As an alternative to a full merger, we think that the boundary between the two parishes could be redrawn along the North-South Bicester link road, which would form a much more natural boundary between the two parishes. This means that the area marked P on the map below would become part of Kidlington Parish.

DAVID ROBEY

Map on the consultation letter

