

## **Kidlington Parish Council**

### **Chair's report: June 2022**

In the last couple of weeks two circulars were dropped through residents' doors both of which call for some commentary.

One was Cherwell District Council's update on their review of the parish boundaries between Kidlington (KPC) and Gosford & Water Eaton (GWE). Readers may remember that this was not initiated by KPC. Cherwell consulted us in the course of a district-wide governance review, and in response we proposed that KPC and GWE should merge because the division between the two is anomalous and because of the benefits of strength in numbers. Cherwell in turn conducted a consultation with residents.

The results, as detailed in the leaflet, were that 334 residents were in favour of the merger and 249 against. 301 were also in favour of our fall-back proposal that the Gosford triangle should become part of Kidlington, and 227 against. Despite this clear majority in favour of our two proposals, Cherwell decided against them on the basis that the turnout was low (the population of the two parishes is about 15,000) and that GWE Parish Council opposed them. Unfortunately the responses were not broken down between residents of the two parishes: it would be relevant to know if a majority in GWE were in favour.

The situation will be reviewed when the massive new housing developments due in GWE have taken place. This is an outcome KPC can certainly live with, given that we are faced with the much more urgent and demanding issue of Stratfield Brake—on which we are working amicably with GWE, and hope to come to a common position.

The second leaflet is of course the circular from Oxford United (OUFC) on their Stratfield Brake proposals. This was sent out immediately after the first of the planned meetings to discuss the proposals between the Club and the council stakeholders—the County Council, Cherwell, GWE and KPC. The leaflet is not in any way the outcome of these discussions, but simply reflects OUFC's starting position. The point of the discussions still to take place is to enable the Club to develop the proposals into a form that is sufficiently firm and detailed to enable the councils to take a decision on them.

Contrary to the original plan, these discussions are being chaired by the Club, or rather by a PR firm employed by the Club. Reluctantly, I have come to think that this is probably for the best: it makes clear that none of the council stakeholders is yet committed to a particular outcome.

KPC's position remains as it has been throughout: we are not taking a decision until the firm and detailed proposals are available, and we will consult residents first. We are still considering how best to do this, since all possible means have their disadvantages, and we are currently in discussion with expert consultants on the best choice.

Whatever means we eventually choose, we are anxious that residents should be as well informed as possible on the issue. We hope that the publicity offensive by OUFC will be matched by similar efforts from organizations such as Kidlington Development Watch (<https://www.kidlingtondw.org/>) and the newly-formed Friends of Stratfield Brake. The issue is highly complicated, difficult and contentious, and it is essential that the views on all sides should be heard.

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