

**East Hagbourne Parish Council**  
**Status report on the SODC Community Governance Review**  
**and its impact on East Hagbourne residents living in Millbrook.**

The Background

South Oxfordshire District Council is carrying out a Community Governance Review that looks at current parish boundaries and representation and identify any changes that are desirable.

Early in 2013, Didcot Town Council informed us that they intended to ask for the part of Millbrook lying within East Hagbourne parish to be transferred to Didcot parish and issued a brief questionnaire over a wide area soliciting support. East Hagbourne Parish Council decided that its position should be guided by the views of Millbrook residents and commissioned a comprehensive and professional survey of 316 dwellings in Millbrook.

A total of 98 completed surveys was returned, representing 31% of the households in Millbrook, with responses in some streets over 50%. This is a large return for such a survey, showing the high level of interest among residents and also indicating that the results provide a reliable indication of residents' views. Of the 98 total responses 93% (89 households) said they wanted to stay part of East Hagbourne, with only 5 wishing to transfer to Didcot and 4 households expressing no strong view.

Status at February 2014

SODC developed terms of reference after consulting with parish councils and other and identified 29 topics for review across the district. The future of Millbrook was incorporated as item CGR9. At the request of EHPC, CGR10 proposes that East Hagbourne be covered by a single parish ward, rather than being divided as at present. The working group has so far supported our position on CGR10, but for CGR9 has recommended that Millbrook should move to Didcot - in spite of a comprehensive submission from East Hagbourne Parish Council presenting the results of the survey.

SODC considered the report of the working group at its meeting on 20th February.

- The Chairman of East Hagbourne Parish Council, David Rickeard presented the case for Millbrook remaining part of East Hagbourne. You can read the statement in the Attachment, or view a recording of the Council meeting at [http://www.southoxon.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/128225](http://www.southoxon.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/128225)
- Several councillors spoke of the importance of responding to the views of those affected by proposed boundary changes. In particular Cllr Leo Docherty (Hagbourne) said that the results of the survey speak for themselves and the wishes of residents should be respected. He pointed out that East Hagbourne has a dynamic parish council and that significantly reducing the size of the parish could undermine its effectiveness. Cllr Bernard Cooper (Didcot Northbourne - one of two district councillors representing Millbrook) said that when residents express their views in such a clear way they have to be taken into account. Both councillors felt that the proposals should be reviewed before they are brought back to the District Council in July.
- Following discussion of several other recommendations the chairman of the working group said that all the points raised would be considered by the working group. However an attempt to modify one of the recommendations was unsuccessful and Council accepted the report of the working group, with the expectation that it would now go out to consultation before a revised proposal is brought back to Council in July.
- What this means in practice for East Hagbourne is that South Oxfordshire District Council will consult with all affected residents in Millbrook and the working group will then consider their comments.

The Parish Council will keep residents informed as more information becomes available. In the meantime, we ask residents of Millbrook to look out for the consultation documents from SODC and to respond - whatever your views. The results of this consultation could be critical in deciding the outcome.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments please contact the Clerk or any Parish Councillor.

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## ATTACHMENT 1

### East Hagbourne Parish Council

#### Statement to SODC at full Council meeting, 20 Feb 2014 on the Community Governance Review

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

I am here to represent the views of those residents of Millbrook living in East Hagbourne parish with respect to item 9 of the CGR which proposes moving those houses to Didcot parish.

We in the Parish Council found it very disturbing to hear on 19th December of last year that the Working Group had already taken a position on this issue before the consultation period had ended and in particular before our own response was submitted on 20 January.

East Hagbourne Parish Council's views have been shaped by a survey of Millbrook residents carried out last summer. We are concerned about the WG recommendation that Millbrook should be transferred to Didcot parish and feel that the strongly expressed wish of residents to stay part of East Hagbourne should be respected.

So I ask full council to take a broader view and reconsider this recommendation.

I will address the five assessment criteria in a moment, but since the survey of Millbrook residents is central to our comments I will say a few words about that first.

- We surveyed only those houses and flats that are directly affected by the proposal
- There are 316 residences in the area and we asked each household to complete a questionnaire with 7 questions;
- The survey was carried out in as neutral a way as possible through a professional market research company, with controls to maintain anonymity and avoid duplicate submissions;
- No pressure was put on people to give specific answers.

#### **We can accept the survey as a true reflection of residents views.**

The results of this survey showed:

- There was a good turn-out - 31% of households responded. What was particularly noticeable was that 88 of the 98 respondents provided written comments, sometimes quite extensive, as well as answering the specific questions.
- The overwhelming majority, [89 of the 98 households], or 93% of those that responded, opposed transferring to Didcot.

This echoes the results of an earlier survey carried out in 2000 when the majority of people surveyed wanted Millbrook to remain part of East Hagbourne.

Turning now to the review criteria:

#### 1. *Natural or man-made boundaries*

The boundary between Didcot and East Hagbourne is long standing and people who live within East Hagbourne clearly feel part of it. In the survey, people cited family ties and social ties with the village or St Andrew's church.

#### 2. *Housing developments that straddle parish boundaries, resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours*

Housing development has indeed progressed such that the boundary does not follow the existing roads.

However, while many people in the survey commented on their affinity with other parts of East Hagbourne, no-one commented on affinity with neighbours in adjoining parts of Didcot.

#### 3. *Effective and convenient representation of local residents at parish level*

61% of survey respondents said they valued being represented by a volunteer Parish Council with low administrative overheads, indicating that they feel better represented as members of a small parish than as part of a larger town.

#### 4. *The Boundary Commissions's proposals for the South Oxfordshire District wards.*

It is natural that at County and District levels, boundaries cover a wider and more heterogeneous area.

But at the local level it is important that people feel identity with the parish that represents them - and the survey results show that people do feel such identity with East Hagbourne. East Hagbourne Parish Council has good relations with our representatives at both District and County level and is well able to represent the views of Millbrook residents in wider discussions

5. *Views of those people directly affected*

The people of Millbrook have expressed their views clearly and powerfully through the survey - they wish to remain part of East Hagbourne parish.

So, arguments can be made under all of the review criteria for Millbrook to remain part of East Hagbourne

Finally:

*I understand that if the current proposal is accepted then it will go forward to 'consultation'.*

*- But such consultation will only be meaningful if the views expressed by residents have some material bearing on the eventual outcome.*

*- Since residents have already clearly and strongly expressed their views, I urge Council to act now and respect their wishes.*

David J Rickeard  
Chairman, East Hagbourne Parish Council  
20 February 2014