

Electoral Review Committee

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 APRIL 2023 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Ashley O'Neill (Chairman), Cllr Gavin Grant (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian McLennan and Cllr Stuart Wheeler

Also Present:

Cllr Suzanne Wickham

10 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Ernie Clark, Paul Oatway QPM, and Ian Thorn.

11 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2022 and 4 January 2023 was presented, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2022 and 4 January 2023.

12 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

13 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

14 **Public Participation**

Public statements were received as detailed under the next agenda item.

15 **Community Governance Review 2022/23**

The Chairman provided details of the background of the ongoing Community Governance Review and presented a report on the consultation on the Draft Recommendations which took place between 7 February – 28 March 2023, which included a number of public meetings. For each recommendation the Chairman along with officers presented summaries of the responses to the consultation and

issues that had been raised, before the Committee discussed the available options and determined what action to take.

Recommendation 1

Recommendation 1 had proposed changes to the boundaries and internal arrangements of Heywood Parish Council and Westbury Town Council around the area of The Ham, currently divided between the two parishes.

A statement was received from Mr Francis Morland, providing further detail and clarification on the representation he had submitted including on the history of the two parishes and the current boundary.

A statement was received from Cllr John Masson, Heywood Parish Council, confirming that the Parish Council had revised its position and considered that the area of the Vivash Urban Park should be retained within the area of Westbury Town Council. The Committee sought additional details on Cllr Masson's view on users of the park and access across the railway lines in the area.

The Unitary Member for Ethandune, which included Heywood, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, made a statement which disagreed with comments from the Town Council that Heywood was not a viable community or council. She provided further details of actions of the parish council and stated that Vivash Urban Park was used by residents from a wide area.

The Committee discussed their draft recommendation in the context of the representations which had been received. It was confirmed that legal advice was that if the Vivash Urban Park were included in the area transferred to Heywood then as a matter of law ownership, liabilities and obligations would be transferred to Heywood Parish council, and there was discussion of potential transfer of any funds held for the ongoing support for the park. The position of Westbury Town Council opposing the transfer of the area of The Ham, even if Vivash were retained, was raised.

The Committee acknowledged it had not been aware of the ownership of the park transferring to the Town Council in December 2022 when it had made its initial recommendation. It did not consider it would be effective to convenient governance to transfer the park and attendant responsibilities to the Parish Council.

In discussion the Committee considered that it continued to believe that, on balance, the area of The Ham represented a distinct community and that leaving it divided would not be in accordance with the statutory criteria for governance reviews. As an established community with some separation from and limited connectivity with the rest of the town, and with a very clear boundary in one of the railway lines to exclude Vivash Urban Park, they considered that the character was sufficiently different from the main urban area of the town as to be a community in its own right. Considering all the responses, the character of the area, the larger part of the existing properties being within Heywood, the Committee upheld its recommendation with a modification to exclude Vivash.

The Committee also discussed representations from Bratton Parish Council and a number of Bratton Parish Councillors and residents. These objected to the Committee not recommending their proposed transfer of land from Edington Parish Council, and raised concerns about the process which had been undertaken during the review.

The Committee received details of those representations and comments from officers, and were satisfied an appropriate process had been followed, and were not persuaded that the additional representations raised additional or sufficient evidence or arguments to change their initial decision that it was not in accordance with the criteria to propose a transfer as proposed. However, it would consider how to further improve any communication to parishes and others as part of any review process.

A break was taken between 11.15-11.20.

Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2 had been to reduce the number of councillors for Tidworth and reallocate the existing ward councillor numbers, following a review of Tidworth and Ludgershall in respect of the Perham Down area.

The Committee noted the representation from Tidworth Town Council proposing an alternative allocation of councillors and the renaming of one ward to include reference to Perham Down, and agreed to amend its own recommendation accordingly.

Recommendation 3

Recommendation 3 had been to transfer various bits of land between the parishes of Netheravon, Figheldean, and Fittleton cum Haxton.

The Committee noted the unanimous support in responses to the consultation, and that the proposal had been endorsed by all three parish councils in the area. They therefore confirmed their proposal for recommendation to Full Council.

Recommendation 4

Recommendation 4 had been to amend the boundaries of Grittleton, Nettleton, and Castle Combe, in response to a request to unify the area known as The Gibb.

Few responses had been received from within the area or without, with Grittleton Parish Council in support of the proposal in general. An additional property in the area not included with the draft recommendation proposal was discussed, and it was agreed to amend the proposal to include it and consult with the property accordingly.

Recommendation 5

Recommendation 5 had proposed transfers of land between Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughterford, mostly involving the area known as Giddeahall.

The Committee noted there had been some comments in opposition to the proposal, but in reviewing the arguments and other evidence including views of the

parish councils was satisfied that its proposal to align the boundary to the main road was in accordance with the statutory criteria.

Yatton Keynell Parish Council had raised that an additional property at Long Dean Mill in Castle Combe would more appropriately sit within their parish. Subject to determining an appropriate line to propose, the Committee agreed to consult with the area on a proposal to transfer them to Yatton Keynell.

The Committee also noted Yatton Keynell Parish Council had reiterated its support for a transfer of the area around the Golf Academy in Chippenham Without, near the community of Tiddlywink. The Committee had declined to recommend a transfer of the area, which had no residents, in 2019/20, and during the current review. The Committee agreed it did not believe there was reason to alter that decision.

Recommendation 6

Recommendation 6 had been to increase the number of Warminster Town Council from 13 to 14, at the request of the Town Council. No further information had been received and the Committee confirmed their proposal for recommendation to Full Council.

Recommendation 7

Recommendation 7 involved decreases and increases respectively in the number of councillors for Donhead St Mary and Monkton Farleigh. Responses were noted, and it was agreed to confirm the proposal for recommendation to Full Council.

Where the Committee had amended their initial draft recommendations, it was agreed to undertake a shorter online consultation on the changes and to consider them further at their next meeting.

It was therefore,

Resolved:

As set out in the report, to delegate to the Director, Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman, the preparation of a detailed Final Recommendations document for consideration of Full Council (Recommendations 3/6/7), and preparation of an Additional Draft Recommendations document for consultation (Recommendations 1/2/4/5).

16 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for 27 June 2023.

17 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

The Officers who have produced these minutes are Kieran Elliott and Max Hirst of Democratic Services, e-mail committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

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