

**Community Governance Review 2022/23**

**Summary**

To consider Final Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee in respect of the Community Governance Review 2022/23.

**Proposals**

**That Council:**

- 1) Approve the changes to community governance arrangements as set out below as recommended and detailed by the Electoral Review Committee in the Final Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1 – Heywood/Westbury**

**Recommendation 2 – Tidworth**

**Recommendation 3 – Netheravon/Figheledean/Fittleton cum Haxton**

**Recommendation 4 – Grittleton/Castle Combe/Nettleton – “The Gibb”**

**Recommendation 5 – Yatton Keynell/Castle Combe/Biddestone & Slaughterford**

**Recommendation 6 – Warminster**

**Recommendation 7 – Donhead St Mary & Monkton Farleigh**

- 2) To authorise the Solicitor of the Council to take all necessary measures to make and approve the Community Governance Order(s) to bring into effect for 1 April 2025 all of the changes detailed under resolution 1, subject to any required consents by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England;**
- 3) To authorise the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary changes to polling districts to bring them into line with the agreed governance changes at the appropriate time, to be reported to the Electoral Review Committee.**

**Reason for Proposals**

To ensure effective and convenient local governance and reflect community interest and identity.

**Perry Holmes - Director, Legal and Governance**

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Full Council**

**17 October 2023**

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## **Community Governance Review 2022/23**

### **Purpose**

1. To consider the Final Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee.

### **Background**

2. A Community Governance Review is a process wherein a principal authority can adjust the governance arrangements of parishes within its council area. This can include amending the number of councillors or wards, the external boundaries, or even the creation/merger/abolition/grouping of entire parishes.
3. Any changes made as a result of the review would take effect for the next elections in 2025.
4. The Electoral Review Committee ("The Committee") has delegated authority from Full Council to oversee any review process in accordance with paragraphs 2.9.6-2.9.8 of Part 3B of the Wiltshire Council Constitution. This includes setting the scope for any review, its methodology, timescales, and preparing recommendations for consideration by Full Council.
5. On 19 August 2022 the Electoral Review Committee published terms of reference for a Community Governance Review ("The Review"). This included consideration of requests for review received prior to the 2021 local elections.
6. The timetable for the Review within the terms of reference was updated on several occasions by the Director, Legal and Governance under delegated authority granted by the Committee, during the course of the review.
7. The parishes included within the Review were: Netheravon, Figcheldean, Warminster, Westbury, Heywood, Dilton Marsh, Bratton, Ludgershall, Tidworth, Castle Combe, Biddestone & Slaughterford, Nettleton, Grittleton, Yatton Keynell, Fovant, Donheat St Mary, Monkton Farleigh, Grimstead.
8. Also included in the terms were any parishes surrounding those listed, for example Fittleton cum Haxton. This was in case any requests emerged from the listed parishes which would have an effect on a neighbouring parish, which could not be foreseen at the outset of the review.
9. Following review, not all areas were recommended to receive any changes.
10. In preparing any recommendations and making any decision respectively, the Committee and Full Council must take account of the statutory criteria for reviews and the need to ensure that community governance within the areas under review:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
- Is effective and convenient.

11. Council tax precept levels would not be a valid criterion to approve or disapprove of a proposal.

## **Main Considerations**

### Pre-consultation

12. During Stage One of the Review additional proposals for the areas set out in Paragraph 7 were sought. During Stage Two the Committee undertook pre-consultation information gathering. The information gathered included notes of sessions with unitary members and parish councils, projected electorate data and housing development, emailed representations and over 120 responses to an online survey.

13. The Committee considered all the relevant information and agreed Draft Recommendations to be consulted upon at its meeting which concluded on 4 January 2023.

### Consultations

14. An initial consultation was held from 7 February 2023 – 28 March 2023 on the Draft Recommendations. Public meetings were held in Grittleton, Heywood, Netheravon, and Biddestone & Slaughterford. Although not a specific requirement of the legislation or guidance, the Committee wrote directly to households in areas where it was recommended that they be transferred from one parish to another.

15. At its meeting on 20 April 2023 the Committee considered all the relevant information responding to the Draft Recommendations. This included the public meeting notes and details of parish representations and a further 19 public representations.

16. At the meeting the Committee resolved to approve some of its recommendations and make amendments to others. As it is a requirement that any option resolved by Full Council must be consulted upon, the Committee agreed to undertake a consultation on Additional Draft Recommendations relating to several recommendations.

17. A further online consultation was therefore held from 10 May 2023 – 7 June 2023 on the amended proposals, which received a further 28 responses including representations.

18. The responses were considered by the Committee along with all other relevant information at a meeting on 26 June 2023. The Committee considered all the information as well as representations made at the meeting, and confirmed all but one recommendation for consideration by Council.

19. The final very limited proposed amendment formed the second Additional Draft Recommendations, and was subject to consultation from 31 July-14 August 2023. The Committee considered the response of the sole affected resident at a meeting on 15 August 2023 and confirmed its Final Recommendations.

## Electorate Forecasting

20. The guidance on Community Governance Reviews has been listed as a background paper. That guidance makes clear that the principal council *'must also consider any change in the number or distribution of electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts'*.
21. The guidance further states that *'planning assumptions and likely growth within the area, based on planning permissions granted, local plans or, where they are in place, local development frameworks, should be used to project an accurate five-year electorate forecast. This ensures that the review does not simply reflect a single moment, but takes account of expected population movements in the short to medium term'*.
22. Considering the entire guidance document as a whole and in context, the Committee is satisfied, as in previous reviews, that consideration of future projections is a relevant factor.

## Final Recommendations

23. The Committee also took account of the statutory guidance provided by the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("LGBCE") in making its recommendations. Consent of the LGBCE would be required for several of the recommendations.
24. As a result of all the meetings and consultations, the Final Recommendations were therefore prepared, and are attached at **Appendix A**. These were published on 17 August 2023.

## **Safeguarding Implications**

25. There are no safeguarding implications.

## **Public Health Implications**

26. There are no public health implications.

## **Procurement Implications**

27. There are no procurement implications.

## **Equalities Implications**

28. There are no equalities implications.

## **Environmental and Climate Change Implications**

29. There are no environmental implications.

## **Workforce Implications**

30. There are no workforce implications.

## **Financial Implications**

31. Additional consultation, if requested by Council to consider further options, could incur additional resources. In particular in relation to the cost of physically mailing those affected in certain areas if appropriate.

## **Legal Implications**

32. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gives the Council the power to undertake CGRs and sets out the criteria for such reviews. There is also statutory guidance on the conduct of such reviews with which the Council would have to comply.
33. As several recommendations impact areas adjusted by the LGBCE as consequential changes following their Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council within the last five years, they would need to consent to any draft Community Governance Order involving those areas.
34. Additionally, some changes to parish boundaries proposed were such that the parishes involved would cross current unitary Division boundaries, but were either not large enough to form their own distinct wards, which is required when crossing Divisions, or it was not considered warding was appropriate. The LGBCE could be requested to amend the Divisions to align to the parish boundaries. The Council would send a draft order for their consent.
35. Should they consent to such an order, the Council would at that point be able to formally request Electoral Division changes, where this was appropriate following a community governance change. This detail is included within the recommendations from the Committee.

## **Risks**

36. A failure to consult appropriately or provide appropriate reasoning for any decision to change governance arrangements would be potentially vulnerable to challenge. For these recommendations the Committee has undertaken several consultations, adjusted its proposals accordingly, and set out its reasoning in detail including responding to representations from affected parties.

## **Options**

37. Council may approve or not approve any of the Final Recommendations. The Council may only approve proposals which have been consulted upon. If minded to approve an alternative proposal which has not been subject to consultation, Council would need to instruct the Committee to undertake additional consultation before it could be approved.

## **Conclusion**

38. The Committee has conducted a very thorough and extensive review of parish governance arrangements in the areas set out in the report.
39. It has undertaken consultation and engagement beyond what is required by legislation or guidance.

40. It has prepared recommendations it considers align to the statutory criteria to better reflect the identity and interests of local communities and provide more effective and convenience local governance.

## **Proposal**

### **That Council:**

**1) Approve the changes to community governance arrangements as set out below as recommended and detailed by the Electoral Review Committee in the Final Recommendations set out in Appendix A:**

**Recommendation 1 – Heywood/Westbury**

**Recommendation 2 – Tidworth**

**Recommendation 3 – Netheravon/Figheledean/Fittleton cum Haxton**

**Recommendation 4 – Grittleton/Castle Combe/Nettleton**

**Recommendation 5 – Yatton Keynell/Castle Combe/Biddestone & Slaughterford**

**Recommendation 6 – Warminster**

**Recommendation 7 – Donhead St Mary/Monkton Farleigh**

**2) To authorise the Solicitor of the Council to take all necessary measures to make and approve the Community Governance Order(s) to bring into effect for 1 April 2025 all of the changes detailed under resolution 1, subject to any required consents by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England;**

**3) To authorise the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary changes to polling districts to bring them into line with the agreed governance changes at the appropriate time, to be reported to the Electoral Review Committee.**

**Perry Holmes - Director, Legal and Governance**

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26 September 2023

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Final Recommendations

## **Background Papers**

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)