

Electoral Review Committee

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2024 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Ashley O'Neill (Chairman), Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian McLennan and Cllr Paul Oatway QPM

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Ian Thorn
Cllr Stuart Wheeler
Cllr Gavin Grant

The Committee noted that Cllr Gavin Grant and Cllr Stuart Wheeler were in attendance virtually (non-voting).

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 were presented for consideration, and it was;

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman explained that following Council's approval of the Committee's recommendations on 17 October 2023, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had given their consent to the requested parish changes in Westbury and other areas.

The LGBCE would be considering whether to amend the Electoral Divisions at their January meeting but given the aforementioned consent to parishes that could be a positive indication.

5 **Public Participation**

No statements or questions were submitted.

6 **Community Governance Review 2023/24**

Public Participation

Area 02 Mere/Zeals - Cllr John Jordan, Chairman of Mere Parish Council

Area 03 North Bradley/Trowbridge - Mr Francis Morland

Area 03 North Bradley/Trowbridge – Cllr Roger Evans, Chairman of North Bradley PC

Additional Request 01- Mr Francis Morland

The Committee considered the information within the information pack, published in the agenda before making draft recommendations and agreeing consultation arrangements for the Community Governance Review (CGR) 2023/24.

It was explained that a public survey detailing received CGR scheme proposals ran from 31 October to 26 November 2023, and was then extended until 31 December 2023, and that letters had been provided to residents of Rowden Lane, Chippenham, as part of the review of that area.

The information pack in the agenda included initial proposals, responses which had been received from parish councils and others, electorate projections, and notes from information sessions with local members and parishes. Attention was drawn to information within the Agenda Supplement.

Area 1 – Winterbourne

The request submitted by Winterbourne Parish Council related to four separate areas around the current boundary which impacted on the parishes of Laverstock & Ford, Durnford, Firsdawn, and Idmiston.

The Committee noted the low number of responses received in relation to the Winterbourne proposals and that the response from Laverstock & Ford Parish Council was opposed to the boundary changes concerning the dwellings within its area.

In each of the areas proposed by Winterbourne Parish Council, the Committee noted limited or non-existent responses, and the lack of perceived governance improvement from the very minor changes. They determined there were no significant community benefits to the proposals and declined to make a recommendation to amend the governance arrangements in the area.

Area 2 – Mere/Zeals

Mere Town Council had submitted a request for an area of the parish of Zeals to be transferred to the town. It related to a small area within the B3092 & A303 slip road area. The site currently had planning permission for business use, the Hill Brush Factory and Visit Hillbrush visitor centre, one dwelling and planning permission for a 70 bed Care Home to the east of the Hill Brush Site.

The Chairman of the Town Council made a statement setting out the reasons for the scheme request and noted that there had not yet been any local consultation with the Mere residents as the town council was awaiting the initial draft recommendations of the Committee before running a local campaign. He stated this was the reason why there had been a low number of responses to the survey from Mere residents and a high number from Zeals resident as Zeals Parish Council had circulated a flyer seeking responses to the survey to its residents.

The Committee noted the high number of responses to the survey, with over 100 responses received stating they disagreed with the proposal.

The Committee received details of the reasons provided in the comments against and the few comments in support. They noted that financial factors such as changes to precept or development S106 funds which had been raised in many of the responses were not relevant considerations under the statutory criteria, which related to community identity and effective governance.

The Committee discussed the nature of the site and its change over the years, in particular the approved 70 bed care home which would alter the character of the site to a more residential one, as well as its proximity to the route into Mere and distance from any communities of Zeals.

The Committee concluded that the location of the care home in relation to the surrounding communities of Mere and Zeals, amenities and local connection argued in favour of the view that in community terms, there would likely be more affiliation with Mere, notwithstanding the objections raised by residents of Zeals.

The Committee also considered whether any other changes would be appropriate along the current boundary in response to comments received during the information gathering stage but considered the evidence did not support this.

Area 3 – North Bradley/Trowbridge

As part of the 2019/2020 CGR involving Trowbridge and North Bradley parishes, the Committee had identified a small number of properties along Woodmarsh which had been included for transfer into a Trowbridge based Division following the drawing of the Divisional boundary by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) during their Electoral Review Wiltshire Council. This was because the properties were included within the draft Housing Sites Allocation Plan, and as a result Wiltshire Council requested, and the LGBCE consented, to transferring that area into Trowbridge Town due to the incoming more urban development that was projected to be incoming. However, the Committee had recognised several historic properties accessed from Woodmarsh should be further reviewed to see if a more suitable boundary line could be agreed.

North Bradley Parish Council (NBPC) had requested the boundary revert completely to what it had been prior to the 2021 CGR changes, or subsequently

at the least that the line be drawn along the A363 through the White Horse Business Park.

Trowbridge Town Council (TTC) had submitted an alternative proposal to move the current boundary so that the existing houses accessed from North Bradley village along Woodmarsh/Westbury Road were all within North Bradley parish and that the development site accessed from the main road A363 and associated green space remained within Trowbridge.

Mr Francis Morland made a statement criticising the process of the 2019/20 CGR which came into effect in May 2021, specifically that public consultation had been conducted solely online due to covid restrictions, which he believed was a huge failure. It was stated that North Bradley Parish Council wished to reverse the entire 2019/20 decision, which it felt had been based on incorrect data. It was further suggested that the Housing Site Allocation Policy, the North Bradley Neighbourhood Plan and the Community Governance Review should be aligned.

Cllr Roger Evans, Chairman of North Bradley Parish Council made a statement advising the Committee that the Parish Council was reviewing its Neighbourhood Plan. He confirmed that whilst the Town Council's proposal had its merits temporarily, the Parish Council ultimately wanted to see the boundary line to revert to what it was prior to May 2021.

The Committee considered the survey responses which included a comment from a resident in support of the Town Council proposal, and the information gathering session feedback from local members and the parish and town councils.

During the information gathering sessions, the Parish Council representative had been broadly supportive of the proposed boundary line put forward Town Council as an improvement on the current boundary but had suggested that the line be moved closer to the new housing, along the middle of the fields, leaving more of the open space area within North Bradley.

The Committee discussed the location of the bat corridor and the open space element of the development site, including ownership and future land management responsibility. It was noted that any draft recommendation did not necessarily have to match the line of the development site, however any proposed change to the boundary would need to meet the criteria for improved community governance and community cohesion.

The Committee agreed that the Town Council, which would result in the existing dwellings which had previously been within North Bradley, being returned, leaving future development on the site, in Trowbridge, which although delayed from the projections within the previous review, was anticipated to take place and would result in a change of character from that of the rural parish, so the reason for the original transfer remained.

Area 4 – Chippenham/Lacock

As part of the 2019/2020 Review involving Chippenham and Lacock parishes, the Committee recommended, and it was agreed, to transfer an area of land containing new housing within the new Chippenham Lowden and Rowden Division from Lacock to Chippenham. The area also included the small area of Rowden Lane, a rural hamlet accessed through the town. The Council had agreed to take a further look at the area to see if the boundary line should be amended but had no specific proposals to pre-consult upon.

The Committee noted that residents in Rowden Lane were written to twice as part of information gathering, in addition to the online survey, and that only one response had been received.

Future development phases in the area were discussed, and the Committee agreed that Rowden Lane was correctly included as part of Chippenham, noting the lack of connection with Lacock and that neither Lacock Parish Council or Chippenham Town Council had requested any change to the current boundary.

Area 5 – Salisbury

The divisional member for Salisbury St Francis & Stratford Ward had requested a boundary review to correct an anomaly with regards to two properties, as detailed in the agenda. No responses had been received to the public survey,

The Committee agreed that the properties in question had been placed in error in the wrong Divisions and this should be corrected to unify all of the dwellings in Dorset Road under St Francis ward and all of the dwellings in Cambridge Road under Milford Road, thus improving community governance and cohesion.

Area 6 – Royal Wootton Bassett/Brinkworth & Broad Town/Clyffe Pypard

The Elections Team had drawn attention to a number of areas which could be reviewed, to see if a more appropriate electoral arrangement was appropriate.

The first area (RWB01) related to a property which currently sat in Royal Wootton Bassett whereas the rest of the associated farm area was in Brinkworth. The cottage had a postal address of Brinkworth but due to the boundary line, the residents were currently required to travel into Royal Wootton Bassett to vote. No response had been received to the proposal, however the Committee agreed that the property should be unified with associated farm buildings and that as a whole the buildings should be in Brinkworth.

The second area (RWB02) related to properties along Broadtown Hill, where the majority of the land and property for one, were in Broad Town parish, but part of the land and property of the neighbouring property along Broadtown Hill was in Clyffe Pypard parish.

The Committee noted the 3 survey responses which had been received in relation to the Clyffe Pypard/Broad Town scheme which had objected to the

proposal. In addition, a detailed response had been submitted (Supplement 1 to the agenda) by one of the co-owners opposing a change, stating what they considered to be their deep connection to the Clyffe Pypard community.

The Committee noted the responses, but felt that considered against the statutory criteria that in community governance terms both properties should be unified within one parish and that this should be Broad Town due to the proximity to the Broad Town community and lack of direct connection with Clyffe Pypard

Area 7 – Chippenham Pewsham

A review had been requested by the divisional member for Chippenham Pewsham division, to look at several properties in Ray Close, Chippenham, which currently sat in the Chippenham Hardens and Central division, with the rest in the Pewsham Division.

The Committee noted that both local members were in support of the proposed change and that to rectify the anomaly would unify all of the dwellings in Ray Close under one electoral division, improving community governance and cohesion.

Area 8 – Trowbridge Lambrok

A review related to a request by the divisional member for Trowbridge Lambrok division, to look at several properties in Frampton Court, part of the Studley Green Estate in Trowbridge, which currently sat in the Trowbridge Grove division.

The proposal would unify approximately 6 dwellings on Frampton Court with the rest of the properties along the same road, improving community governance and cohesion.

The Committee noted the support of Trowbridge Town Council and both of the local members to the proposal.

Area 9 – Seend/Melksham Without

A request had been made by the divisional member for Bowerhill, to look at a Farm property with associated Farm buildings along the A365 between Bowerhill and Redstocks.

It was suggested that the boundary be changed to move New House Farm, which was currently in the parish of Seend, Devizes Rural West Division, to Bowerhill Ward, in the parish of Melksham Without, Bowerhill Division.

The Committee noted that both parish councils involved were not in support of the proposal and felt that there was no benefit in terms of community cohesion or governance for New House Farm to move from Seend to Melksham Without.

Area 10 – Calne

The request related to the boundary line around Low Lane, which was changed as part of the 2021/2022 Review. It had come to light that the changed boundary line did not include the entirety of a new housing development site

separating several dwellings which would remain in Calne Without parish, with the rest in Calne.

The Committee noted the support of Calne Without PC to the proposal.

The Committee agreed that all of the dwellings in the new development should be unified within one division and that the boundary line should be redrawn to include them all within Calne Central.

Additional anomalies

The Committee considered five additional potential anomaly requests which had been highlighted by the Elections Team, as detailed in agenda supplement 1.

01 – Millstream Cottages in Westbury East

The request was to amend the boundary to follow the stream round the back of the millstream cottages in Westbury East, which currently bisected one dwelling in half.

Mr Francis Morland made a statement to the Committee noting that the proposed boundary change would not impact on any existing or potential electors, in addition a previous CGR had been conducted on the area, so there was no good reason to open it up for debate again.

The Committee considered the boundary line, noting it appeared to be causing a dwelling to be separated from the rest, in terms of its parish and Electoral Division. It was agreed that further inspection of the actual boundary line be carried out and should it be found that the boundary line did not match that of the river and did separate one or more properties, then the boundary should be redrawn to run along the river, thus unifying the properties all under one division.

02 – Heath Cottage, Clench Cottage, Marlborough

This request related to Wilcot, Huish and Oare, and West Overton, part of Kennet Valley Joint Parish Council (Pewsey Vale West, and Marlborough West) and involved the property, Heath Cottage/Clench Cottage which was in Wilcott Huish and Oare but very close to parish boundary line and two unitary division boundaries.

The Committee looked at surrounding properties in relation to proximity to logical community connections and agreed that a wider picture of local amenities and connections would be beneficial and could be obtained by conducting a consultation on the proposal to transfer the area to West Overton.

03 – Kingston Road in Bradford on Avon North

This request related to a property at 6 Kingston Road in Bradford on Avon North, as the remainder of the properties at 1 to 5 Kingston Road were in

Bradford on Avon South. The request was to redraw the boundary to encompass all six dwellings into Bradford on Avon South.

The Committee agreed that as all six dwellings were accessed from the same road, moving the boundary would unite them together, improving community cohesion and governance.

04 – Bolwell Place in Melksham Forest

This request related to Bolwell Place, which was a block of flats which was split across two Parish Wards and therefore Divisions. It was proposed that they be brought into one ward together.

The Committee agreed that the flats be unified together and that should be Melksham Forest. They also requested further investigation of the polling district and other boundary lines to ensure these aligned.

05 – High Street, Calne

This request related to 5 houses on the west side of the High Street in Calne, currently in Chilvester & Abberd, which were in a different ward to the houses on the east side of the High Street. It was proposed to redraw the boundary to bring all of the High Street facing dwellings into one ward, that of Calne Central.

The Committee agreed it was in the best interest in terms of community cohesion and governance to reunite dwellings in the same street which face each other.

Consultation Details

The Committee agreed to amend the consultation dates to 6 February to 12 March 2024 (5 weeks) due to the rescheduled later committee date.

It was agreed that letters would be sent to each household where it was proposed to move from one parish to another. In addition, a public meeting would be held where any significant change was proposed.

At the close of debate, it was,

Resolved:

To delegate preparation of a draft recommendations document to the Director Legal and Governance, including reasons for any proposed changes, along with arrangements for a public consultation.

7 **Parish Name Change Request**

The Committee considered two Parish Name Change requests, as set out in the agenda and Supplement 01.

Luckington

Luckington Parish Council submitted a request to change their name to Luckington and Alderton, to reflect the two communities making up the parish. They already informally used the name and had not been aware it was not the legal name of the parish.

Although no responses were received to a public survey set up in December, the request was considered to be reasonable and appropriate, and the Committee agreed to recommend the change to Full Council for approval request at its next meeting.

Clyffe Pypard

After publication of the agenda Clyffe Pypard Parish Council provided a request to change the name of their parish to Clyffe Pypard and Bushton, also to reflect the communities which make up their parish.

As there had not been time to conduct any kind of public survey the Committee agreed to defer a decision on the request until the next meeting to provide that opportunity..

It was then,

Resolved:

- 1. To recommend to Council that Luckington Parish Council change its name to Luckington and Alderton Parish Council.**
- 2. To conduct a survey on the Clyffe Pypard PC Name change request.**

8 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 27 March 2024 at 10:00am.

9 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Lisa Alexander of Democratic Services, direct line 01722 434560, e-mail lisa.alexander@wiltshire.gov.uk

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