

ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2019 AT WEST WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman),
Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Jonathon Seed (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Cllr Graham Wright

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Christopher Newbury and Ashley O'Neill.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2018 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

4 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements

5 Public Participation

There were no statements or questions submitted.

6 Electoral Review Update

On 5 February 2019 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("The Commission") had published its draft recommendations for a pattern of divisions for the Wiltshire Council area, along with suggested names for those divisions, taking into account the Council's submissions and all other representations they had received.

Following informal discussion with the Committee shortly after the recommendations had been published, and the circulation of a briefing note to all councillors and towns and parish councils, the Chairman had arranged for some workshop sessions for local members in areas of particular concern where the Commission's recommendations diverged significantly from the Council's proposals. All Committee members received an open invitation to attend those sessions.

The Chairman reported on the outcomes of the discussions with local members, and the Committee discussed each area of divergence and agreed the approach they felt should be taken in those instances. It was emphasised that simply restating an initial submission in the absence of new or much stronger evidence would not be persuasive to the Commission, and the Committee additionally considered that where it felt changes proposed by the Commission were in keeping with the statutory criteria of the review, in the absence of local community objection it would usually recommend not objecting to the proposals.

It was agreed that the Commission's proposals in Malmesbury, which included the historic centre of the town within the proposed Sherston division, should be objected to with a slight revision to the Council's initial proposed division of the town included with the Council's next submission. It was noted that the Commission's proposals in relation to the Lyneham and Tidworth divisions were similar to options that the Committee had considered before settling on its submission proposals, and it was therefore minded to recommend that Council did not object to the Commission's proposals. While the proposals for the Calne area had not been previously considered the Committee was informed local members had no objections and it was agreed to raise no objection the proposals. Minor changes to division lines in Trowbridge Drynham to include the business park, between Bradford on Avon North and South and around areas in Chippenham and Marlborough were also recommended to receive no objection.

In relation to the Corsham area while there were concerns about the proposals within the town after careful consideration of relevant factors and arguments, the Committee agreed to recommend no objection be made, noting that that Commission had raised the possibility of imposing a two member division on the area. The Committee continued to strongly feel that no two member divisions should be created. However, the Committee did recommend objections be made to the boundary between Chippenham Lowden and Rowden and Corsham Without, as the proposed line extended far beyond the new development on the edge of the town and unnecessarily and inappropriately divided the parish of Lacock and created an urban rural split that did not reflect a cohesive community approach.

The Commission's proposals in Warminster had resulted in one very geographically large division, and following discussion with local members it was recommended some parishes within it be included within another division in the area, along with some minor changes within the town division lines. Proposals in relation to Till and Nadder and East Knoyle divisions were recommended to be accepted in the absence of local objection.

It was agreed objections should be made in relation to proposals in Westbury, which had combined the parish of Dilton Marsh with a town division, and the north of Westbury within the proposed Ethandune division, rather than an entirely rural division. Subject to potentially some minor changes within the town division lines, it was agreed to broadly argue to maintain the Council's initial proposal with appropriate supporting evidence.

The Commission's proposals in most of Salisbury city were accepted with a minor change in Bemerton, and correction in Harnham to retain the line as the Council had proposed around new development, along with a new section around the Harnham slope. However, it was strongly considered that the Commission's proposals in relation to the east of the city and Laverstock and Ford parish did not align with the statutory criteria, arbitrarily dividing the parish into three divisions. It was accepted the parish of Odstock did not fit well with the Council's proposed Laverstock division, but the Committee recommended the rest of the initial proposal be reargued, as it was felt there was strong evidence that the Commission had not properly considered relating to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

In relation to the Melksham area discussions had also been held with parish representatives, and given the principles the Council had set out in relation to new edge of urban development being included with urban divisions, and the lack of flexibility given the electoral equality of the various divisions, it was agreed to resubmit the initial proposals with appropriate supporting evidence.

At the conclusion of discussion it was noted that the Committee would consider a draft submission at its next meeting and the Council would consider that submission at an extraordinary meeting on 25 March 2019, with the consultation deadline running until 15 April 2019. Members were encouraged to spread the word on the consultation and for anyone with a view to respond to the Commission.

Resolved:

To consider a draft submission at the meeting on 11 March 2019.

7 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.35 - 4.15 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

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