

ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2019 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Gavin Grant (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Cllr Graham Wright

9 Apologies

There were no apologies.

10 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019 were presented for consideration and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

12 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements.

13 Public Participation

There were no questions or statements submitted.

14 Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council

Following receipt of final representations during a further limited consultation, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England had published its Final Recommendations for new Unitary Divisions for Wiltshire Council. These would be laid before Parliament and come into effect at the next elections in May 2021, along with consequential changes to many town and parish boundaries.

The Chairman noted the outcome of the Final Recommendations, which had accepted the council's submissions in respect of some areas, but retained what

the council considered to be suboptimal divisions in others, particularly relating to the splitting of Idmiston between two divisions, however noted that the process was not at its end.

The Chairman thanked all the Committee and its supporting officers for the huge amount of work that had gone into preparing the various submissions the council had made over the course of the electoral review, and noted the conclusion of the process.

15 **Polling District and Polling Place Review 2019**

At its meeting on 8 July 2019 the Committee received a report on the outcome of a preliminary review on polling districts and polling places which was required to be completed by 1 January 2020, and resolved to publish a notice of the holding of a review, the representation of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO), and launch a public consultation on that information. That consultation ran from 12 July 2019 to 9 September 2019 and included communication with key stakeholders.

74 responses were received during the consultation, including 19 in relation to the use of Redland School as a polling station. It was reported that due to the impact of the Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which would significantly impact many polling districts and any solutions to concerns raised during the consultation, it was proposed there be minimal alternations to current arrangements, as there would be a further review in 2020.

The Committee considered the report, which recommended 5 issues be reviewed during the 2020 review as a result of unitary changes, 9 changes to a different established polling venue, and 8 changes to designate a polling place as the polling district, and for the ARO to investigate suitability and availability of alternatives and consider the cost and sites for temporary polling stations. It was noted that in event of an unscheduled election, such sites as could be available at short notice might have to be used even if planned to be adjusted in future.

The Committee also noted a few specific areas where it felt further work should be undertaken to identify suitable alternative venues, such as in the east of Melksham where electors presently must travel a long distance, past other stations, to reach allocated stations. It was also confirmed the 2020 review, and changes to districts as a result of unitary changes, would enable elimination of anomalous polling districts.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To agree the draft recommendations as set out in the appendices and recommend approval by Full Council at its next meeting.

16 **Date of the Next Meeting and Future Work Programme**

The Committee received a report setting a proposed forward work programme for the next several years, taking into account the confirmation by Full Council that it be a standing committee as part of the council's governance arrangements. It was proposed that the Committee receive reports and make recommendations or decisions in relation to Electoral Services matters, and that a schedule of work be undertaken for long term review of parish governance arrangements, as well as monitoring variance of Unitary Divisions to prevent the need for a whole council review if possible in the future.

It was also proposed that Polling District and Polling Place Review decisions be delegated to the Committee, as these were a highly technical process and could be undertaken on an annual basis. All unitary members would be kept informed of any review or proposed decisions.

The date of the next meeting was also confirmed as 31 October 2019.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To approve the initial Forward Work Programme of the Electoral Review Committee detailed at Appendix B; and,

To recommend Full Council amend the Terms of Reference of the Electoral Review Committee to the following:

2.10.11 To make decisions in respect of proposed Polling District and Polling Places Reviews.

2.10.12 To receive reports in relation to the operation and delivery of Electoral Services, and make recommendations or decisions as appropriate on Electoral matters not reserved to Full Council.

17 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1400 – 1430)

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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