

Electoral Review Committee

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 AUGUST 2020 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

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

Also Present:

Cllr Andrew Bryant

17 **Election of Chairman**

Nominations were sought for a Chairman for the forthcoming year. It was,

Resolved:

To elect Councillor Richard Clewer as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

18 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

Nominations were sought for a Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year. It was,

Resolved:

To elect Councillor Gavin Grant as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

19 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Clare Cape and Christopher Newbury.

Councillor Cape was substituted by Councillor Ruth Hopkinson.

20 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2020 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

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

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

22 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

23 **Public Participation**

Statements were received under Item 8 – Community Governance Review.

24 **Community Governance Review**

Public Participation

A statement from Francis Morland was received.

Clive Blackman made a statement regarding Recommendation 3.

Annie Spilsbury made a statement regarding Recommendation 3.

Nick Westbrook made a statement regarding Recommendation 12.

At its meeting on 24 March 2020 the Committee agreed proposals to be included in Draft Recommendations for the Community Governance Review 2019/20 to be consulted upon. The consultation, which was extended as a result of Covid-19, took place from 15 May 2020 to 10 July 2020. Details of all responses received were included with the report.

The Committee received the responses and determined which Recommendations it considered should be put before Full Council as a Final Recommendation.

Prior to debate on the Recommendations, a statement was read out from Mr Francis Morland regarding use of electorate projections and interpretation of statutory guidance. In response it was stated that reading the whole guidance in context supported the position taken by the council and set out in the report.

The Committee debated each Recommendation, discussing the responses which had been received and arguments which had been made in support and objection. Full reasoning for any recommendation would be included in the Final Recommendations.

In relation to Recommendation 1 to transfer the Netherhampton East ward to Salisbury Harnham West, the Committee upheld its Draft Recommendation. The proposal was supported by both parish councils, and the area's character and interests would appropriately fit with the city more than the parish. The Committee did not consider there was grounds to seek to amend the area to be transferred as suggested in one response.

In relation to Recommendation 2 to merge two Salisbury City Council wards into a single ward coterminous with the Electoral Division of Salisbury Milford, the Committee upheld its Draft Recommendation. The situation was clearly

anomalous compared to every other city ward. The Committee did not consider there were grounds to change the name of the City parish as suggested in one response.

In relation to Recommendation 3 to transfer the Rawlings Farm and Barrow Farm wards of Langley Burrell Without to Chippenham Monkton and Chippenham Hardenhuish, and the Showell ward of Lacock to Chippenham Lowden and Rowden, statements in opposition to the Lacock proposals were received from Clive Blackman and Annie Spilsbury, highlighting opposition by local residents in Rowden Lane and historic connections with Lacock.

The Committee considered all responses and relevant information, noting that all the parish councils involved supported the proposals. The objections to the Lacock proposals was noted, however during debate it was considered that the changing character of the Showell ward as a whole, the isolation from any remaining part of Lacock, and reasons of effective and convenient governance in respect of parish and Division boundaries, meant that the proposals should continue to be recommended to Full Council. However, the Committee did consider that the precise line between the two parishes, and Divisions, could possibly be reviewed again in the future as the situation development further.

In relation to Recommendation 4 to transfer Cedar Lodge, Allington, from Kington St Michael to Chippenham Without, the Committee confirmed its Draft Recommendation. The proposal was supported by both parish councils and the resident affected and better reflected the communities below.

In relation to Recommendation 5 to transfer an area of Manningford to Woodborough, the support of both parish councils was noted, subject to clarification of the exact line along the roads detailed, along with the support of respondents who agreed the area was more appropriate in community terms with Woodborough. It was therefore confirmed.

In relation to Recommendation 6 to remove the wards of Pewsey Parish Council, the lack of objection was noted and it was therefore confirmed.

In relation to Recommendation 7 to transfer a small area of Pewsey to Wilcot it was agreed the current situation was anomalous and it remained appropriate to support the transfer as proposed by the parish councils.

In relation to Recommendation 8 although a few responses had objected to the merger of Wilcot and Huish, most respondents had supported the proposal, and it was noted that in effect the very small parish had been in joint arrangements with Wilcot for some time, and it was an anomaly that this had not been officially approved. The Committee therefore upheld the recommendation as a whole.

In relation to Recommendation 9 to not create a new parish at Derry Hill and Studley at this time, but to undertake a further, wider community governance review, it was noted there remained significant support for a new parish, with some feeling there was no need for a delay. However, the Committee continued to consider that it was necessary to take account of impacts on surrounding

parishes in the event a new parish was created, and upheld its recommendation.

In relation to Recommendation 10 to amend the ward boundaries of two Calne Without wards, it was agreed that the proposals corrected a clear anomaly and should be supported.

In relation to Recommendation 11 to transfer the White Horse and Park wards of North Bradley to Trowbridge Drynham, and Trowbridge Park respectively, it was noted that over 60 objections and only one supporting representation had been received to the online survey, with many more emailed and physical objections received.

The Committee debated the objections, including but not limited to suggestions the proposals were premature, impact on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan, scale of the proposals, the inclusion of several properties accessed off Woodmarsh whose neighbours would remain in North Bradley parish and other issues as detailed in the responses.

The Committee discussed advice it had received in relation to Neighbourhood Development Plans that these were a distinct process and did not prevent the transfer of land if considered appropriate under the criteria for community governance reviews. The designated plan area would remain unaffected.

A proposed amendment to Recommendation 11 was suggested by Councillor Andrew Bryant, Trowbridge Drynham Division, to exclude a number of existing properties accessed off Woodmarsh from the transfer between parishes. This would also require amendment to the Electoral Division by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The Committee noted the boundaries of the incoming wards and Divisions, and that to consult upon further proposals at this stage would in effect mean those wards would come into being in May 2021. It considered that although the boundary line including a few of the existing properties within the Trowbridge Drynham Division was not ideal, there would be a detriment to effective and convenient governance for the ward as a whole if there was not a transfer ahead of the May 2021 elections, and it also considered for the whole of the White Horse and Park wards the proposals were appropriate in community terms. However, the Committee did consider that the precise line between the two parishes, and Divisions, could possibly be reviewed again in the future as the situation development further.

On balance, and after discussion, it was therefore agreed to continue to recommend the transfer of the areas.

In relation to Recommendation 12 regarding rejecting a proposed merger between Melksham and Melksham Without, a statement was received from Mr Nick Westbrook seeking a deferral of a decision by the council. The Committee did not feel there was justification to delay a decision, and considered that its reasoning for rejecting a proposed merger continued to apply and should be

proposed to Full Council. Furthermore, that a proposed merger had been reviewed twice in five years, and that while it would be for a future Council and Committee to consider any future action, the present Committee considered it unlikely the issue would need reviewing further for a considerable time.

In relation to Recommendation 13 to transfer the Hunters Wood ward of Melksham Without to Melksham East, and the 'Land north of Sandridge Common' to Melksham East, it was agreed to uphold the recommendation. The proposals were supported by most respondents and the council involved, and reflected the communities appropriately.

At the conclusion of debate,

Resolved:

To delegate to the Director of Legal and Governance in consultation with the Chairman, the preparation of a detailed Final Recommendations document for consideration by Full Council, in accordance with the discussions above.

25 **Parish Name Change Review**

In July 2019 three parishes or parish councils requested that their name or name of their parish council be amended by Wiltshire Council. At its meeting on 31 October 2019 the Committee agreed to progress the requests under S.75 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The proposals from the three parishes or parish councils were advertised in briefing notes and online surveys, as detailed in the report.

The Committee discussed the report and the responses which had been received, as well as the reasoning provided for each request. They agreed with the reasoning provided for each change, and agreed to recommend Council amend the parish names accordingly.

Resolved:

To recommend Council approve the following parish name changes:

- **Fittleton to Fittleton cum Haxton**
- **Fyfield and West Overton to Kennet Vallet Parish Council**
- **Cheverell Parva to Little Cheverell.**

26 **Area Board Boundary Review**

Following the Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council the Area Boards as presently constituted would no longer align to the Electoral Divisions that would come into effect for the May 2021 local elections. Accordingly, it would be necessary for the Council to adopt alternative arrangements.

At its meeting on 21 July 2020 Full Council amended the terms of reference of the Committee to enable it to make recommendations in respect of the boundaries of Area Boards through such processes as it considered appropriate.

In July 2020 representatives of the Committee arranged sessions for each Area Board to discuss the changes to Electoral Divisions and potential options and implications for any future Area Board arrangement.

The Committee reviewed each existing Area Board and the impact of the incoming Divisions, as well as considering if any historical arrangements were no longer the most suitable. Some of the points raised in debate included but were not limited to:

- Agreeing that wherever possible parishes should not be split between Area Boards as this led to inefficient and sometimes contentious arrangements;
- Considering whether the Division of By Brook might be suited to an Area Board other than Chippenham, but concluding it remained the most appropriate place for the Division.
- It was noted that the Local Government Boundary Commission had split two parishes between Divisions in the South East of the council area and in order to avoid splitting any parishes between Area Boards there were Three Divisions which therefore would need to be included together. On balance, it was agreed that those Divisions should be included with the current Southern Area Board.
- It was accepted that the Devizes Rural West Division, which included significant areas previously within the Melksham Area Board, should be included with the Devizes Area Board.
- It was noted that three community areas in the East of the council area now had only Three Divisions. The Committee did not feel it was appropriate that those areas be merged in a single area board, so agreed that all would be included in a single Area Committee, which would appoint the Area Boards. This would enable them to have their own Chairs and make their own decisions, whilst allowing substitution arrangements to deal with any issues of quorum. The Committee did feel the area committee should itself still meet from time to time to ensure the benefits of community cooperation.
- It was agreed the expanded Lyneham Division should remain in the Royal Wootton Bassett Area Board, and the expanded Holt Division in the Bradford on Avon Area Board.
- For Amesbury Area Board it was agreed the parishes of the Avon Valley looked to the town and should be included within it, with the Bourne Valley area included in the Southern Area Board.
- It was agreed the Salisbury Area Board should comprise only Salisbury City Divisions.
- Other than to align to the new Divisions, there were no other proposed changes for the Corsham, Trowbridge, Westbury, Warminster, South West Wiltshire, or Tidworth Area Boards.

The Committee agreed that although it was not a requirement, there should be a consultation with the public, parishes and interested parties on its proposal, ahead of a meeting of Full Council of 24 November 2020.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

To consult upon proposed new Area Board Boundaries from 10 September 2020 – 31 October 2020.

Note: Consultation document at [this link](#).

27 **Polling District and Polling Place Review**

At its meeting on 26 November 2019 Full Council had undertaken a review of polling districts and polling places. This had been required to be completed under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 as it had been five years since the previous review.

As the review had taken place prior to implementation of the new unitary electoral divisions that would come into effect on May 2021, it had been noted that a further review would need to be taken to reflect those new boundaries, although there was no legal requirement to conduct a further review.

A report from the Head of Elections advised that as the boundaries would not be in force until May 2021, and as a result of impacts arising from the COVID-19 situation, it was proposed to conduct the further review to reflect the new boundaries after the May 2021 elections. This would also enable the Council to reflect any changes from the ongoing Community Governance Review.

It was also noted that as a result of constitutional changes, a future Polling District and Polling Place Review could be approved by the Committee without reference to Full Council.

The Committee discussed the report, seeking details of the process and timescales for updating polling districts and polling places, and noting that a further report would follow the 2019-20 Community Governance Review with a schedule of necessary changes in advance of May 2021 as required.

Resolved:

It was,

- 1) Agreed to postpone the Polling District and Polling Place review until after the May 2021 elections;**
- 2) to consider the need for a Polling District and Polling Place review if there is lack of feedback from the May 2021 elections that changes are required;**

3) To note that a revised schedule of necessary changes to polling districts will be submitted for approval in Autumn 2020.

28 **Forward Work Plan**

The Committee received a report on outstanding Community Governance Review requests, which due to their number were not able to be included in the 2019/20 review.

It was agreed that the next review would take place after the May 2021 elections, and that the remaining requests would be grouped in order of priority to enable two or three reviews to allow implementation ahead of the May 2025 elections.

Resolved:

That the next Community Governance Review would commence post May 2021, and for officers to prioritise the list of forthcoming reviews for consideration by the Committee at that time.

29 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for 27 October 2020. This would be rescheduled around the consultation on the Area Board Boundary Review, ahead of consideration by Full Council on 24 November 2020.

30 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 am - 12.15 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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