

## Electoral Review Committee

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### MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 DECEMBER 2022 AND 4 JANUARY 2023 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

#### Present:

Cllr Ashley O'Neill (Chairman), Cllr Gavin Grant (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian McLennan, Cllr Paul Oatway QPM and Cllr Ian Thorn

#### Also Present

Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Virtual)

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#### 1 Election of Chairman

Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling explained that he would be standing down as Chairman of the Committee and would preside over the election of a new Chairman.

On the nomination of Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling, seconded by Councillor Allison Bucknell, it was,

#### Resolved:

**To appoint Councillor Ashley O'Neill as Chairman for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.**

*As there were only three members present, the Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, to adjourn the meeting until 4 January 2023.*

*Councillors O'Neill, Blair-Pilling, and Bucknell were in attendance on 21 December 2022. All other listed attendees were present for the readjournment on 4 January 2023.*

*The meeting reopened at 1330 on 4 January 2023.*

#### 2 Apologies

As the meeting opened on 21 December 2022 apologies had been received from Councillors Ernie Clark, Gavin Grant, Ian McLennan, Paul Oatway QPM, Ian Thorn, and Stuart Wheeler.

Apologies were also provided to the readjournment of the meeting on 4 January 2023, from Councillor Stuart Wheeler. Councillor Wheeler joined the meeting virtually, so would not vote upon any proposal.

### 3 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 were presented for consideration, and it was,

#### **Resolved:**

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

### 4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

### 5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### 6 **Public Participation**

No questions were submitted for the meeting.

Mr Francis Morland addressed the Committee under Minute 7, in relation to community governance proposals in Westbury and the surrounding areas.

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

A Community Governance Review was launched in August 2022 as set out in the report. This followed a decision of the Committee of areas to be included within that review at its meeting on 31 May 2022.

During the first stage of the review information gathering had taken place including meetings with potentially affected parish councils, local unitary members, online public surveys of submitted proposals, and other details included within the information pack attached with the report.

The Chairman updated the Committee on the information gathered on previously submitted proposals, as well as new proposals received since the commencement of the review. For each of the areas included as part of the review the Committee discussed the information and determined in turn whether they should make recommendations in respect of any boundaries or electoral arrangements of any parishes. This would be where recommendations were considered to be in accordance with the statutory criteria of ensuring effective and convenient governance, and that arrangements reflected community interests and identity.

Issues raised during discussion and debate included a detailed discussion of the multiple proposals relating to the Westbury community area, in particular the proposal from the Town Council that it be merged with Heywood parish or, failing that, that significant areas of that parish should be included within the town boundary.

The Committee was not persuaded that the parishes should be merged, noting the very strong evidence of lack of any local support for the proposal, and lack of reasoning or evidence to overcome such objection. The strong opposition of the parish council and public responses was noted. In respect of transfers, it was argued from various parties that the area known as The Ham was currently divided between the two parishes, and amongst other proposals this should be unified.

The Committee was persuaded by the representation of the parish council that, given the existing spread of semi urban properties which retained identity distinctive from the main settlement of Westbury, the railway line would form a clear and natural boundary between Heywood and Westbury, which would not be the case should properties at The Ham be moved the other direction.

It therefore agreed to consult upon a proposal to transfer land from Westbury to Heywood.

The Committee considered a proposal to transfer land from Edington to Bratton, but did not consider sufficient reasoning or evidence had been submitted which would justify under the criteria recommending a change.

In relation to the proposals for Tidworth and Ludgershall, the Committee was not persuaded that sufficient evidence or reasoning had been provided that would justify under the criteria a transfer of the area of Perham Down from Tidworth to Ludgershall. It then considered the proposal from Tidworth Town Council to adjust its councillor numbers, and made recommendations as appropriate.

The Committee noted the agreement reached between the parishes of Netheravon, Figcheldean, and Fittleton cum Haxton, regarding potential transfers of land between their parishes. They accepted this appeared to be a sensible and reasonable proposal under the criteria, and agreed to formally consult upon the change.

The Committee also discussed potential options for the area known as The Gibb, currently divided between the three parishes of Nettleton, Castle Combe and Grittleton, noting no cohesive proposal had been received from any of the parishes involved, though it was agreed the area had needed review. The Committee considered all the information available and agreed an initial proposal for consultation, which would place the settlement entirely within the parish of Grittleton.

The Committee also made slight alterations to a proposal relating to transfers of land between Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughterford, to better align to clear boundaries such as the main road. It considered a suggestion regarding transfer of land from an area of Colerne parish to Biddestone & Slaughterford, for an area around an old paper mill site, but considered the responses received and reasoning did not support a change under the criteria.

In respect of the proposals from Warminster, Donhead St Mary, Fovant, and Monkton Farleigh, the Committee considered the reasoning offered for why they wished to reduce or increase their councillor numbers, and made recommendations as they considered appropriate. They noted Grimstead Parish Council had withdrawn an initial proposal for altering their governance arrangements, and in its absence did not consider there was justification to recommend any alterations at the present time.

For each area the Committee took votes on their recommendation, with details of the consultation documentation to be delegated to officers. The Committee also discussed appropriate consultation arrangements, including whether to hold any public meetings.

Accordingly, at the conclusion of discussion, it was,

**Resolved:**

**To delegate to the Director, Legal and Governance, after consultation with the Chairman, the preparation of a detailed draft recommendations document, including reasons for any change, to be consulted upon as appropriate.**

*The proposals of the Committee are summarised below in general terms, and will be set out in full in the Draft Recommendations, including any associated governance arrangement changes such as warding and councillor numbers.*

*Area 1 – to recommend transferring land from Westbury to Heywood, and a small area from Heywood to Westbury.*

*Area 2 – to recommend reducing the number of parish councillors for Tidworth from nineteen to fifteen in appropriate warding arrangements.*

*Area 3 – to recommend transfers of land between the parishes of Netheravon, Figheldean, and Fittleton cum Haxton.*

*Area 4 – to recommend transfers of land between the parishes of Grittleton, Nettleton, and Castle Combe.*

*Area 5 – to recommend transfers of land between Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughterford*

*Area 6 – to recommend increasing the number of parish councillors for Warminster from thirteen to fourteen in appropriate warding arrangements.*

*Area 7 – to recommend reducing the number of parish councillors for Donhead St Mary from thirteen to eleven.*

*Area 8 – to recommend reducing the number of parish councillors for Fovant from nine to seven.*

*Area 9 – to recommend increasing the number of parish councillors for Monkton Farleigh from seven to eight.*

*Area 10 – to make no recommendation in respect of Grimstead and conclude the review.*

*Councillor Oatway left the meeting at 1450.*

8 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was confirmed as 20 April 2023.

9 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting 21 December 2022: 10.30 - 10.40 am)

(Duration of meeting 4 January 2023: 1.30 - 3.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services,  
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