

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

26 June 2023

Community Governance Review 2022/23 – Consultation on Additional Draft Recommendations

Purpose

1. To consider responses to the consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations of the Committee as agreed on 20 April 2023.

Background

2. A Community Governance Review is a process whereby a principal authority can adjust the governance arrangements of parishes within its council area. This can include amending the number of councillors or wards, the external boundaries, or even the creation/merger/abolition/grouping of entire parishes.
3. The Electoral Review Committee (“the Committee”) has delegated authority from Full Council to oversee any review process in accordance with paragraphs 2.9.6-2.9.8 of Part 3B of the Wiltshire Council Constitution. This would include setting the scope for any review, its methodology and timescales, as well as preparing recommendations for consideration by Full Council.
4. At its meeting on 31 May 2022, the Committee approved areas for a review to take place beginning in 2022, and delegated approval of terms of reference to the Director, Legal and Governance. These were published in August 2022.
5. The parishes included within the Review were: Netheravon, Figcheldean, Warminster, Westbury, Bratton, Dilton Marsh, Heywood, Tidworth, Ludgershall, Castle Combe, Biddestone and Slaughterford, Nettleton, Grittleton, Yatton Keynell, Fovant, Donhead St Mary, Monkton Farleigh, Grimstead, or any parishes surrounding those listed, and any issues involving those parishes.
6. During the first phase of the review additional proposals for the areas set out in Paragraph 5 were received from parishes. Where these were received before the pre-consultation phase began, they were included within the pre-consultation information gathering. The information gathering also included:
 - Sessions between representatives of the Committee and affected unitary members and parishes;
 - An online survey of received proposals, with over 120 responses received;
 - Details of emailed representations.
7. During Stage One of the Review additional proposals for the areas set out in Paragraph 5 were sought. During Stage Two the Committee undertook pre-consultation information gathering as detailed in paragraph 6. This included reminder emails sent to parish councils for them to encourage local responses.

8. The Committee considered all information at its meeting which concluded on 4 January 2023, and prepared draft recommendations for consultation.
9. A consultation was therefore held from 7 February 2023 – 28 March 2023. Where the Committee proposed to transfer electors from one parish to another, a letter was sent to those potentially affected. Over 200 letters were therefore sent. Public meetings were held in those areas where transfers were proposed, along with the publication of a briefing note.

Main Considerations

10. In preparing any recommendations and making any decision the Committee and Full Council must take account of the statutory criteria for reviews and the need to ensure that community governance within the areas under review:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
- Is effective and convenient.

11. Council tax precept levels would not be a valid criterion to approve or disapprove of a proposal.

Progress of the Review

12. At its meeting on 20 April 2023 the Committee considered responses to the initial consultation and other representations. It resolved to make some alterations to some of its initial recommendations, and to confirm others for consideration by Full Council.
13. A consultation was therefore held from 10 May 2023 – 7 June 2023. Where the proposal included a property not previously proposed to be transferred, that property was written to directly. In keeping with past practice, as a supplementary consultation on adjustments to the previous proposals, the rest of the consultation was online.
14. 19 responses were received on the online consultation portal during the consultation period. There were also 8 further representations provided by email. All responses are included within **Appendix A**.
15. The Committee will review the representations and any other information which may be provided in reaching any conclusions.

Safeguarding Implications

16. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

17. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

18. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

19. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

20. There are no environmental implications.

Workforce Implications

21. There are no workforce implications.

Financial Implications

22. Any further consultations could incur additional resources, in particular in relation to the cost of using an external provider to physically mail out to those affected in certain areas if appropriate.

Legal Implications

23. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gives the Council the power to undertake CGRs and sets out the criteria for such reviews. There is also statutory guidance on the conduct of such reviews with which the Council has to comply.

Risks

24. A failure to consult appropriately on proposals from the Committee or provide appropriate reasoning for any decision to change governance arrangements would be potentially vulnerable to challenge.

Options

25. The Committee may confirm its additional draft recommendations for consideration by Full Council, it may remove some recommendations and refer the remainder to Full Council for consideration, or it may amend its recommendations further. If amending its recommendations, the Committee would need to undertake additional consultations before Full Council could consider approving those recommendations.

Proposal

26. That the Committee consider the responses to the Additional Draft Recommendations consultation.

27. To delegate to the Director, Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman, the preparation of a detailed Final Recommendations document for consideration by Full Council, and/or preparation of any further Additional Draft Recommendations for consultation.

Perry Holmes - Director, Legal and Governance

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13 June 2023

Appendices

Appendix A – Information Pack

Background Papers

[Additional Draft Recommendations](#)

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)