

ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2018 AT THE NORTH WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

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

Also Present:

Cllr Ruth Hopkinson

1 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2017 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 members of the public in attendance.

6 **Electoral Review Update**

The Chairman introduced all of the documentation that had been publicly published following the two workshop sessions held on 20 December 2017 and 3 January 2018, to enable the Committee and others to make data based analyses of appropriate council size options. This had included details on the council's governance and scrutiny arrangements, the representational role of council, comparative local authority data, electorate forecasts, survey data from councillors, and the responses from the consultation with council staff the Committee had requested. A member felt that any consultation response requested from staff should include details of which officer submitted the responses.

The Committee considered all the data published including the submissions, and discussed whether the evidence as presented justified any particular council sizes. It was confirmed electorate to councillor ratios and cost factors were not relevant considerations, and it was agreed that the council needed to support whatever number it felt the evidence suggested, not attempt to assume the Local Government Boundary Commission for England had a target number to reduce the council to, and to react to such an assumption.

The Committee considered that area board arrangements in Wiltshire, being formal area committees with delegated executive authority and distinct budgets designated for historic community areas, were a significant factor to consider. With only minor reductions in the overall council numbers the representational role of councillors was significantly impacted in several areas. The evidence as submitted suggested the workloads for councillors had already increased over time and would continue to do so, as it was not accepted that a certain level of delegation of assets to towns and parishes would reduce unitary councillor workloads, particularly in rural areas. The council's governance and scrutiny arrangements operated effectively and were efficiently organised, and it was noted the most recent peer reviews of scrutiny indicated the arrangements were appropriate and working well. As a result, some members suggested an increase in councillor numbers would develop and improve the effectiveness of the present arrangements further, rather than a reduction below 93, which it was felt would make the governance arrangements unworkable.

It was noted that Cornwall Council had recently been reviewed and had been reduced in size by a third, however it was also noted that Cornwall had also undertaken devolution arrangements with central government, whereas Wiltshire Council had decided pursuing such arrangements was not suitable and was not subject to any agreement regarding devolution arrangements. Additionally, its Community Network Areas lacked the significance of the delegated powers of the Area boards, and it had even fewer parish councils than Wiltshire.

Other issues raised included more details on area board arrangements and the need for both council administrative and democratic efficiency.

At the conclusion of discussion, and upon the moving of Councillor Jonathon Seed, seconded by Councillor Graham Wright, it was,

Resolved:

That the evidence as presented supported a council size of between 93-99, and that further work be undertaken ahead of the meeting on 25 January 2018, where the Committee would determine the precise appropriate figure.

7 **Work Programme**

It was confirmed that it was not felt necessary to hold an additional workshop meeting on 16 January 2018.

Resolved:

To note the work programme.

(Duration of meeting: 12.35 - 2.00 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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115