

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

7 May 2024

Community Governance Review 2023/24 – Consultation on Additional Draft Recommendations

Purpose

1. To consider responses to the consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations of the Committee as agreed at the meeting on 3 April 2024.

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 2.10.7-2.10.9 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 26 June 2023, the Committee approved areas for a review to take and delegated approval of terms of reference. This was published in September 2023.
5. Following withdrawal of some requests for review, the parishes specifically included within the Review were: Winterbourne, Laverstock & Ford, Firsdown, Idmiston, Durnford, Mere, Zeals, North Bradley, Trowbridge, Chippenham, Salisbury, Lacock, or any parishes surrounding those listed, and any issues involving those parishes.
6. There was also provision to consider minor alterations to other parishes not listed if considered appropriate. These were not subject to detailed pre-consultation surveying, owing to their minor nature. Where the committee determined there may be grounds for correction of a potential boundary anomaly, it contacted those parishes when a draft recommendation was made.
7. During the first phase of the review additional proposals for the areas set out in Paragraph 5 were received from parishes or other parties. 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 125 responses received;
 - Details of emailed representations.

8. 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.

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

Main Considerations

10. 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 7.

11. The Committee considered all information at its meeting which concluded on 9 January 2023, and prepared draft recommendations for consultation. Recommendations were made for the following areas:

Mere, Zeals, North Bradley, Trowbridge, Salisbury, Brinkworth, Royal Wootton Bassett, Clyffe Pypard, Broad Town, Chippenham, Calne, Calne Without, West Overton, Wilcot, Huish and Oare, Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham, Westbury.

12. A consultation was therefore held initially from 12 February 2024 – 18 March 2024. Where the Committee proposed to transfer electors from one parish to another, a letter was sent to those potentially affected. A briefing note was also circulated.

13. A public meeting was held on 18 March in Mere for the changes in that area. Due to the date of the meeting the consultation survey was therefore extended before that meeting to last until 28 March 2024.

14. 26 representations were received in total to the Draft Recommendations consultation.

15. The Committee withdrew its draft recommendations relating to Clyffe Pypard/Broad Town, and for Wilcot, Huish, and Oare/West Overton It confirmed all its other recommendations for consideration by Full Council.

16. The Committee received details of additional requests or issues relating to internal boundaries in Melksham, and for the boundary at Southwick and North Bradley parishes.

17. It resolved to make provisional draft recommendations for consultation.

18. A consultation was launched on 10 April until 5 May. Both parish councils were informed in advance of 10 April, as well as on that day and with subsequent reminders.

19. All residents proposed to move from one Melksham Town ward to another were written to directly. All residents in the area currently divided between Southwick and North

Bradley – known as Scotland and Ireland – were written to directly on two occasions, dated 10 April and 24 April.

20. Details of responses received to the consultation will be published in an agenda supplement ahead of the meeting of the Committee on 7 May 2024.

Safeguarding Implications

21. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

22. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

23. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

24. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

25. There are no environmental implications.

Workforce Implications

26. There are no workforce implications.

Financial Implications

27. Additional consultation, if requested, 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

28. 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 that the Council would have to comply with.

Risks

29. 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

30. 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. If amending its recommendations, the Committee would need to undertake additional consultations before Full Council could consider approving those recommendations.

Proposal

31. That the Committee consider the responses to the Additional Draft Recommendations consultation.
32. 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 Additional Draft Recommendations for consultation and the details of that consultation.

Perry Holmes - Director, Legal and Governance

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26 April 2024

Appendices

None

Background Papers

[Draft Recommendations](#)

[Additional Draft Recommendations](#)

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

[Terms of Reference of the Electoral Review Committee](#)

[2023/24 Review terms of reference](#)