

NOTES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW WORKING PARTY

29 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present : Councillors Carter, Cochrane, De Rhe-Philipe, Hubbard, Humphries, Macrae, Morland, Jeff Osborn, Packard, Seed.

1. Councillors agreed that they would not elect a chairman for this meeting.
2. John Quinton informed members of the working party of their role in reporting to Council on the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England.
3. John Watling ran through his briefing paper which outlined the process for consultation and on the proposals from the Boundary Commission.
4. Members of the working party discussed various options for revisions to the proposals but agreed that they would prepare any alternative proposals that they wished to present for consideration by the group at its next meeting – these proposals will reflect the following objectives – proposed constituencies should
 - A. best serve the residents of Wiltshire
 - B. reflect minimum change where possible
 - C. reflect community cohesion/identities
5. The number of constituencies and the cross county border proposals were agreed in principle and that any revised proposals, which can include amendments to constituency names, would be supported by arguments that reflect the above objectives.
6. It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 18 October 2011.

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18 OCTOBER 2011

Present : Councillors Bucknell, Cochrane, Deane, Groom, Hubbard, Macrae, Morland, Jeff Osborn, Packard, Seed.

Apologies received from Cllr Carter.

1. Councillors agreed to elect Councillor Deane as chairman of the Working Party.
2. John Quinton reminded Members of the role of the Working Party and of the decisions taken at the last meeting.
3. John Watling ran through the paperwork that had been circulated to councillors on 4 October – copies of which were available at the meeting.
4. Councillor Seed was then invited to introduce the motion that had been circulated prior to the meeting and which set out the following revised proposals for consideration by the Working Party;-

“In consideration of the Boundary Commission proposals for the reorganisation of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wiltshire and Dorset, Wiltshire Council is mindful of the requirement to achieve Constituencies with a prerequisite number of voters and the complexity of achieving this task. Wiltshire Council would also prefer to retain the cohesion of Community Areas where at all possible.

Whilst there are several local government Divisions where the residents would prefer to be part of a Constituency other than that proposed by the Boundary Commission the plight of the Lyneham Division being separated from its natural topographical, Community Area and political connections to Wootton Bassett is the most dire and could be resolved without any further realignment of local government divisions. Wiltshire Council therefore recommends that the Division of Lyneham reverts to the proposed Chippenham Constituency.

Wiltshire Council has considered the realignment of the whole of the Corsham Community Area within one Constituency but accepts that this would produce a knock on effect that would leave other local government Divisions so similarly disaggregated as to make any proposals to realign Corsham equally unfair. Wiltshire Council thus accepts with reluctance the proposals for the Corsham local government Divisions to be split between two Constituencies and the resultant split of both Town Council and Community Area boundaries.

Wiltshire Council is also concerned at the names suggested for the new Constituencies. The Constituency of Chippenham is largely similar to the pre 2005 Constituency of North Wiltshire but adopting the name of “Chippenham” would ignore the inclusion of the other Towns of Wootton Bassett, Cricklade and Malmesbury within the new Constituency. Wiltshire Council recommends that this Constituency be renamed North Wiltshire accordingly. Similarly the Council suggests that the name of Trowbridge is inappropriate for a Constituency that also contains the significant towns of Melksham and Bradford on Avon and recommends that the name of West Wiltshire would be more appropriate.”

5. Members agreed the first two paragraphs. In relation to paragraph 3 Cllr Macrae reported the views of Corsham Town Council who objected to the proposal from the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) which would split the Corsham Community area and indeed the Corsham Town Council area between two different constituencies. Cllr Macrae accepted that moving the whole of the Corsham community area into either of the adjoining constituencies would not meet the electorate tolerances set by the BCE. On being put to the vote paragraph 3 of Councillor Seed’s motion was agreed with Councillor Macrae abstaining from the vote.
6. In relation to paragraph 4 the Working Party considered the issues of Chippenham and Trowbridge separately. In relation to Chippenham various members of the working party put forward arguments to support the name change to the North Wiltshire constituency namely, that the constituency as proposed is very similar to the previous North Wiltshire constituency and therefore the proposal was to revert back to the correct description, and secondly, that outside of Chippenham the majority of local support was for the name of North Wiltshire for the constituency. This element of paragraph 4 was also agreed.
7. In relation to Trowbridge the argument in support of the use of the West Wiltshire Constituency name was that Trowbridge did not reflect the main population centre in that it was outnumbered by a combination of Melksham and Bradford on Avon. Geographically West Wiltshire would be a more accurate description and identity for the constituency. In opposition to this proposal members of the Working Party pointed out that Trowbridge was the main population centre for the area and that the description of West Wiltshire failed to recognise that the large population centres of Warminster and Westbury were not contained within it. On being put to the vote the proposal as contained within Cllr Seed’s motion was agreed by 7 votes to 1 (with Councillor Osborn voting against the proposal).
8. The Working Party then considered a number of other proposals, namely

- A. Moving the Till and Wylde division into the Salisbury Constituency and the Tisbury division into the new Shaftesbury and Warminster constituency
 - B. Moving the Lavingtons and Erlestoke division in to the Devizes constituency
 - C. Moving the Egham division into the new Shaftesbury and Warminster division
9. There was no consensus on any of these proposals and Members agreed to meet again on 24 October to consider these matters further together with any other proposals referred to it by any other member of the Council.

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24 OCTOBER 2011

Present : Councillors Cochrane, Deane (in the chair), De Rhe-Philipe, Hubbard, Humphries, Macrae, Morland, Jeff Osborn, Packard, Seed.

Councillor Gamble attended to present a revised proposal in relation to the Lavingtons and Erlestoke division.

1. The Working Party considered the business outstanding from the last meeting and any revised proposals submitted by members of the Council.
2. Following the last meeting all members of the Council had been asked to submit any revised proposals for consideration by the Working party prior to its report to Council.
3. Councillor Gamble outlined the arguments behind his proposal for the Lavingtons and Erlestoke division to remain within the Devizes constituency. There were geographical and historic affiliations between this division and the town.
4. Councillor Hubbard also outlined the proposal submitted from Councillor West that had been circulated with the agenda that the Till and Wylve Valley division should remain in the Salisbury constituency.
5. The Working Party had a wide ranging discussion on these proposals. On being put to the vote both revised proposals were not agreed. Councillors Hubbard, Morland and Osborn voted in favour of each of the revised proposals as presented to the Working Party.
6. The Working Party then proceeded to consider their draft report to Council and the recommendations that it would make as set out in that report.
7. The recommendation in relation to Lyneham was agreed with Councillor Hubbard requesting that his abstention from the vote be recorded. Likewise the recommendation in respect of Corsham was agreed.
8. In relation to the third recommendation and the proposed re-naming of constituencies the Working Party felt that it would be easier to manage the debate at Council if it was broken down into two separate recommendations.
9. In relation to the North Wiltshire recommendation four members of the council had submitted representations in support of the proposal and stated that their local councils were also in support of it. On being put to the vote this recommendation was confirmed by the Working Party.

10. In relation to the proposed Trowbridge constituency one councillor had submitted a representation in support of the proposal to name the constituency Trowbridge, as had the Town Council. One councillor had also submitted a representation in support of the proposal to name the constituency West Wiltshire. On being put to the vote the draft recommendation was agreed that the constituency should be renamed West Wiltshire.
11. It was agreed that the draft report for Council would be updated to reflect the Working Party discussions and circulated to members for comment.