

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

# Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

held on Tuesday 3 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

in the Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



**Open to the public, including the press**

## **Present:**

Members: Councillors Robert Maddison (Chair), Ron Batstone, Eric de la Harpe, Diana Lugova and Viral Patel

Officers: Susan Baker, Electoral Services Team Leader, and Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager.

Remote attendance: Jordan Kennedy and Chris McMullin, Electoral Services Officers and Susie Royse, Broadcasting Officer

## **22. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Sarah James with Councillor Viral Patel attending as substitute, and Councillor Max Thompson with Councillor de la Harpe attending as substitute.

## **23. Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 18 March 2024 as a correct record and agree that the chair sign them as such.

## **24. Declarations of interest**

None.

## **25. Urgent business and chair's announcements**

None.

## **26. Public participation**

Councillor Barrow addressed the committee. He spoke in support of the draft LGBCCE proposals for Grove, which reflected that submitted by the council, and against any alteration to the proposal which could result in East Challow parish becoming part of a larger Grove ward or a larger Grove and Wantage ward. He spoke in support of the retention of Baulking and Uffington parishes within the same ward due to their shared community identity and working relationship between the two parishes.

## **27. Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's Warding Proposals for Vale of White Horse**

The committee considered the report of the head of legal and democratic on the council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) proposed warding pattern for the district.

The committee welcomed the high correlation between the Commission's draft recommendations and those proposals put forward by the council.

The committee raised no objection to the following draft recommendations which reflected the proposals put forward by the council:

- Abingdon South
- Kingston Bagpuize
- Botley & Sunningwell
- Kennington & Radley
- Cumnor
- Marcham & Wootton
- Drayton
- Steventon & East Hanney
- Sutton Courtenay

The committee considered the following draft recommendations on which councillor representations had been submitted.

### **Abingdon-on-Thames (Abingdon East, Abingdon North wards)**

The committee noted that there was a slight the difference between the arrangements for Abingdon set out in the final recommendations for Oxfordshire County Council and those proposed for Abingdon East and Abingdon North district wards around Mattlock Way and Hendred Way. The committee also noted that this was a consequence of the two reviews overlapping - the county review had to take account of the existing district ward boundaries. Whilst accepting the logic of the argument for the recommendations in terms of road access, the committee agreed that greater weight should be given to achieving coterminosity with the Oxfordshire divisions in Abingdon allowing for effective and convenient local government.

The committee agreed to raise an objection to the proposal based on the above.

## **Blewbury, Harwell & Western Valley and Hendreds**

The committee considered the representations received from councillors which argued that Harwell parish should be included in a district ward with other rural villages rather than within a ward with Western Valley parish which had a different identity and demographic. Whilst acknowledging the points raised, the committee noted that a single member Western Valley ward would have an electoral variance of -16%. In addition, the committee noted that, as set out in the Commission's draft recommendations document, the alternative arrangements would not provide for an effective balance of the three statutory criteria.

The committee also considered the representations received in respect of Harwell Campus. These argued that the Campus was geographically closer to Chilton and should be included within the same ward as Chilton parish. The committee noted that the draft recommendation, which reflected the council's proposal, included the Harwell Oxford Campus ward of Harwell Parish Council, currently in the Hendreds ward, within the Harwell & Western Valley ward thus providing for the parish to be included in a single ward. The committee also noted that any proposal to include the whole of Harwell campus within one parish would need to be considered as part of a community governance review (a review of parish arrangements) and could result in related alterations at the district ward level.

The committee agreed to make no objection to the proposal.

In response to the Commission's invitation to comment on the ward name for the proposed Blewbury ward, the committee agreed that Blewbury & Chilton was suitable reflecting the two largest settlements.

## **Grove**

The committee considered the representations regarding the proposed Grove ward. The committee supported the view that Grove should not form a greater ward with either Wantage or East Challow and noted the arguments set out in the Commission's draft recommendations discounting alternative arrangements which would not achieve electoral equality.

The committee agreed to make no objection to the proposal.

## **Wantage (Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury)**

The committee agreed to raise no objection to the proposed ward boundaries. The committee also considered the names of the proposed wards. Following a discussion of suggested alternatives, East and West wards, the committee agreed to support the proposed ward names, Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury.

## **Faringdon & Stanford, Watchfield & Shrivenham and Ridgeway wards**

The committee considered the representations opposing the separation of Baulking parish (proposed to be included in the Ridgeway ward) and Uffington parish (proposed to be included in the Watchfield & Shrivenham ward). The representations argued that the two communities had a shared community and close local government links at parish level. Whilst acknowledging that the draft

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recommendations achieved electoral equality, the committee considered that greater weight should be given to boundaries that reflect natural communities. The committee agreed that the Commission should amend their proposal to facilitate the inclusion of Uffington and Baulking in the same ward.

The committee agreed to raise an objection and request that Uffington and Baulking are included within one ward.

Whilst not opposing the proposed Faringdon & Stanford ward, the committee expressed the view that should the Commission agree an alternative final recommendation in response to the outcome of the consultation, that sufficient consideration should be given to the smaller villages of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell and their community identity. Members expressed concern that the smaller settlements could be used to achieve electoral equality at the expense of the other two statutory criteria.

**RESOLVED:** to authorise the democratic services manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee, to finalise a draft council response based on the committee's decisions set out in the minutes for submission to Council for consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:**

1. To consider the draft submission agreed by this committee:
2. To authorise the democratic services manager to finalise the document for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The meeting closed at 6:53pm