

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Listening Learning Leading

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

HELD AT 6.30 PM ON TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2022

MEETING ROOM 1, ABBEY HOUSE, ABBEY CLOSE, ABINGDON, OX14 3JE

Present

Lynn Lloyd (Chair)

David Bartholomew, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Mocky Khan and David Turner

Apologies:

Ken Arlett tendered an apology.

Officers:

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

Remote attendance:

Jordan Kennedy and Chris McMullin, Electoral Services Officers

28 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Arlett.

29 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

30 Declarations of interest

Councillor Mocky Khan declared an interest in agenda item 6 – Community Governance Review – Didcot, as a Didcot Town Councillor.

31 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None.

32 Public participation

None.

33 Community Governance Review - Didcot

Councillor Khan declared an interest in this item as a Didcot Town Councillor, and as such did not take part in the decision-making on this item.

Further to minute 25/10/2022, the committee considered the community governance review CGR_G on a review of the number of councillors elected for each town council ward.

The committee noted the remarks made by Councillor Victoria Haval, in her capacity as a town councillor for the Ladygrove town ward, at the meeting held on 10 October 2022.

The majority of councillors supported the proposal because it would address the current difference in the levels of representation between the different town wards and achieve better effective and convenient local government for both the electorate and councillors. In doing so, the committee noted that the Millbrook ward would continue to have a lower level of representation and acknowledged the community identity and boundary issues identified in the report schedule. However, councillors did note that, whilst Ladygrove had been over represented at recent elections, the reduction of one ward councillor and the construction of new houses in the area could, in a short period of time, result in the ward having a lower ratio of councillors to represent residents.

Councillors expressed the view that Didcot Town Council had insufficient councillors to deal with the workload and that a future review should consider the size of the town council and the levels of representation between each ward.

RESOLVED:

1. To combine the parish wards of Northbourne and Orchard.
2. That each parish ward is represented by the following number of councillors:
 - All Saints – 5 councillors
 - Ladygrove – 6 councillors
 - Millbrook – 1 councillor
 - Northbourne and Orchard – 4 councillors
 - Park – 5 councillors
3. To authorise the head of legal and democratic to make a reorganisation of community governance order to implement the changes agreed.

34 The timing of future community governance reviews

Further to minute 26/10/2022, the committee considered an officer proposal to amend the requirement to carry out community governance reviews every four years. In 2017 the committee had agreed to undertake a community governance review every four years after the scheduled parish council elections, with any agreed changes implemented in time for the next scheduled elections. However, this had proved resource intensive. It also invited parish councils to consider and submit speculative requests, often on a repeat basis.

Legislation provided for community governance reviews to be conducted at any time. Guidance, issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the Department for Communities and Local Government suggested that reviews could be triggered by:

- changes in population, or in reaction to specific or new local issues
- new housing developments expanding communities over time
- councils exercising their discretion, but conducting a review every 10 to 15 years
- a petition for the whole or part of the council's area, subject to rules around previous reviews carried out by the principal council

The guidance suggested that councils should consider undertaking a community governance review of its whole area in one go, rather than carrying out small scale reviews in a piecemeal fashion of smaller areas. However, specific reviews could be undertaken at any time, for example to adjust minor parish boundary anomalies.

The committee considered that a reliance on the statutory guidance provision for a district wide review every 10 to 15 years would not address the needs of the district particularly in respect of the growth in housing and corresponding population increase which could necessitate more regular reviews to ensure effective and convenient local government and representation. The committee agreed that a full district wide community governance review should be undertaken prior to the elections in May 2027 with any changes implemented for those elections. In addition, the committee agreed that a decision on the timing of a future review should be taken by the committee during that review. The view was expressed that regular four yearly reviews ensured parish arrangements could be amended to reflect changing circumstances.

RESOLVED: That

1. the council undertakes a district wide community governance review prior to the 2027 elections to allow for any changes agreed to be implemented at the scheduled parish elections in May 2027: and
2. this committee agrees the timing of a future district wide review as part of the above community governance review.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

Chair

Date

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