

COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2017

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Pamela Bale, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lee Dillon, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge (Vice-Chairman), Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb (Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support) and Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Honorary Alderman John Chapman (Honorary Alderman), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Honorary Alderman Royce Longton (Honorary Alderman) and Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Peter Argyle, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Jeanette Clifford, Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Billy Drummond, Honorary Alderman Geoff Findlay, Councillor Marcus Franks, Councillor Nick Goodes, Councillor Mike Johnston, Honorary Alderman Joe Mooney, Councillor Richard Somner, Councillor Anthony Stansfeld and Honorary Alderman Alan Thorpe

Councillor Absent: Councillor Howard Bairstow, Councillor Jeremy Bartlett and Councillor Gordon Lundie

PART I

54. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

55. Membership of Committees

Councillor Graham Jones proposed that Councillor James Cole replace Councillor Howard Bairstow on the Western Area Planning Committee. Councillor Howard Bairstow would be appointed as a substitute on this Committee. The recommendation was seconded by Councillor Clive Hooker.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

56. Boundary Review - Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's Draft Proposals (C3399)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's (LGBC) proposed changes to the District's warding patterns from the 2019/20 District Council Elections.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

That the Council:

"approves the proposed changes to the following wards (set out below and in more detail in Appendix B) as the Council's formal response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's review of the Council's warding patterns.

- (i) Bucklebury and Aldermaston (Paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6)

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- (ii) Hungerford and Kintbury (Paragraph 3.7)
- (iii) Basildon and Compton (Paragraph 3.8)
- (iv) Wash Common, Newbury Central and Greenham (Paragraphs 3.9 to 3.21)
- (v) Thatcham Central and Crookham (Paragraphs 3.22 to 3.25)
- (vi) Purley and Tilehurst (Paragraphs 3.26 to 3.29)
- (vii) Florence Gardens (Paragraph 3.30)".

Councillor Graham Jones noted that there was a typographical error on page 19 of the documentation and that the net effect of changes to the proposed new Ridgeway Ward should read **minus** 4%. The leader noted that this was a cross party submission and he thanked Councillor Lee Dillon for his input on the Steering Group. He also thanked all the other Members of the Steering Group for their contributions. He also thanked Andy Day and his team for all the work they had put into getting the proposals prepared.

Councillor Graham Jones commented that this was a very difficult piece of work to get right and he accepted that there might not be universal support for all of the proposals contained within the Council's submission. The draft recommendations published by the LGBC on the 29 August 2017 proposed that the number of councillors be reduced from 52 to 43. After considering the LGBC's recommendations the Steering Group felt that it would be more beneficial to focus on specific proposals and that it was not possible to re-consider all the boundary changes.

The Council would continue to state its preference not to have three member wards, where practicably possible, and that any modifications needed to ensure that councillors were close to the people they were representing and that wards were based on community interest. The building blocks for wards should therefore continue to be the parishes. It was however accepted that a three member ward should remain in Hungerford and Kintbury as there was local support for the proposal.

The Council was also proposing to retain a three member ward in Burghfield and Mortimer. Councillor Graham Jones accepted that there were divergent views on this proposal.

Councillor Alan Law commented that at the March 2017 meeting he had voted against the Conservative Administration for the first time in his life. He felt that the original proposal for the Basildon and Compton Ward did not meet the objective of strengthening a sense of community. He also felt that the previously proposed ward was too big for one councillor to cover properly.

He had therefore submitted an alternative proposal to the LGBC and he was now happy with the revised proposals splitting the area into two one member wards (Basildon and Ridgeway Wards). He would be writing to the LGBC to offer his support.

Councillor Graham Pask commented that he was not supportive of the LGBCs proposal for the three member Bucklebury and Aldermaston Ward which would cover 15 parishes. In his opinion having to cover that many parishes would diminish the representation afforded to parishioners. The villages to the south of the A4 had a different feel to the rest of the proposed ward, much of which was in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). He felt the Council's proposed revision, three one member wards, was an excellent proposal and he hoped that it would find favour with the Boundary Commission.

Councillor Mollie Lock stated that she was not in favour of the three member Burghfield and Mortimer Ward. This was a diverse ward with communities built around schools, churches, pubs and doctors surgeries> Mortimer has recently had its Neighbourhood Development Plan approved and Burghfield was in the process of developing their own

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one. She felt that it would be difficult to democratically represent their residents. Members knew their residents and their diverse needs and they knew how to assist those residents. She did not therefore think that a three member ward in this area would properly serve the needs of the residents.

Councillor Graham Bridgman commented that he did not agree with Councillor Lock's comments. He had liaised with Councillors Keith Chopping, Carol Jackson-Doerge and Ian Morrin, all of whose wards were affected by the proposals that he was going to comment on. These three wards (Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead) were those that formed an overlap with the Wokingham constituency. These four councillors supported the proposed three member Burghfield and Mortimer Ward, but wished to exclude any part of the Sulhamstead Parish.

The previous Council submission to LGBC included a single member Mortimer Ward covering the Stratfield Mortimer parish alone and a two member Burghfield Ward comprised of the Beech Hill, Burghfield, Sulhamstead and Wokefield parishes, despite the stated desire of both the Beech Hill and Wokefield parishes that they preferred to be linked to Mortimer rather than Burghfield.

The fundamental premise running through the original WBC proposal was that parishes were the basic building blocks of local democracy, and splitting them between district council wards should not be undertaken unless it was wholly unavoidable.

This premise was unfortunately ignored by the LGBC in their proposals for their new Burghfield and Mortimer ward, by including the southern part of the Sulhamstead parish but putting the northern part into the new Aldermaston and Bucklebury ward. As a consequence the new Burghfield and Mortimer ward up to a plus 10% margin over the average electorate, whilst the Aldermaston and Bucklebury ward would be -7%. Sulhamstead Parish Council had also expressed a strong desire not to be split into two wards.

This group of Councillors therefore felt that there was some logic to creating a ward containing the service villages of Burghfield and Mortimer based on the concentration of local population in those villages, the fact that the Beech Hill and Wokefield Parish Councils had expressed a desire to remain connected to Mortimer, and that the area shared a secondary school namely In addition there was a developing synergy between local voluntary groups in the two villages.

Councillor Bridgman commented that the Members were however not supportive of creating a vast new Aldermaston and Bucklebury ward. This was primarily due to the fact that this area was situated in sparsely populated rural countryside. They therefore supported the Council's proposal to have three one-member wards in this area rather than a single three-member ward.

Councillor Rick Jones stated that the Council's proposed submission set out a well balanced proposal. He was concerned that the LGBC appeared to base their proposal on a mistaken view of boundaries and linkages. He had some concerns about the proposals around Purley and Tilehurst but they were not sufficient to reject the Council's proposal as a whole.

Councillor Alan Macro stated that although he was broadly supportive of the proposals he wished that the Council had gone further and objected to all three member wards.

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Councillor Dominic Boeck stated that he too was very concerned about the LGBC's proposals for the Bucklebury and Aldermaston ward which would cover 15 parishes. In his experience residents in rural areas generated a lot more case work and these communities were more difficult to service, due to their rurality. The idea of addressing individual parishioners' issues around this giant ward was extremely daunting. The LGBC appeared to have ignored the Council's fundamental principle of boundaries following communities.

Councillor Tim Metcalfe commented on the proposed Tilehurst North Ward, where it was proposed that the three member ward for Purley and Tilehurst be amended to one two member ward for Purley and a one member ward for Tilehurst. He agreed that the Purley Ward was too big a ward for one Member but did not think that residents would recognise the Tilehurst North Ward. He noted the Council's preference not to have three member wards but felt that this ward should be included in a three Member Birch Copse Ward.

Councillor James Fredrickson commenting on the LGBC's proposal for Greenham and stated that as ward member he supported the Council's proposal to redraw the Greenham ward and to create a new Newbury St John's ward. In talking to the community and looking at responses to a range of consultation exercises affecting these residents it had become evident that they considered themselves to form part of the wider Newbury Community and not that of Greenham. He therefore commended Officers for suggesting the proposed change.

Councillor Emma Webster commented that although she agreed with the Council's position in respect of three member wards, as a member representing residents in a three member ward, she would not want residents to think that this configuration did not work. It was important to put residents at the heart of all decisions and to ensure that members represented their residents to the best of their ability. Councillor Tony Linden supported Councillor Webster's comments on three member wards.

Councillor Lee Dillon thanked Councillor Alan macro for attending the Working Group on his behalf at late notice. He commented that this was a difficult issue to get right and that where it was not possible to get things right it would be necessary to make compromises in order to get the numbers to stack up. Following the last Council meeting all Members had been invited to make submissions to the LGBC and his Group had taken the opportunity to do so.

Councillor Dillon stated that he too welcomed the Council's proposal to remove the majority of the three member wards. He noted that a three member ward in Thatcham could be problematic for the Town Council.

Councillor Dillon noted his thanks that the report had been brought back to full Council for discussion and he asked if the result of the vote could be recorded in the minutes.

Councillor Graham Jones in summing up stated that it was not possible to 'please all the people all the time'. He thanked members for the positive debate on the proposal and stressed the need to get the boundaries right in order to represent the residents properly. He accepted that there was a divergence of views on the Burghfield and Mortimer wards and he felt that both cases had been well put. In terms of the Purley on Thames Ward he accepted that the decision was marginal. He hoped that the LGBC would draw heavily on the evidence presented by the Council and that they would support the Council's amendments. He encouraged all members to write to the LGBC setting out their views.

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The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.17.3 it was requisitioned that the voting on the recommendation be recorded. The names of those Members voting for, against and abstaining were read to the Council as follows:

FOR the Motion:

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Jeff Beck, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Virginia von Celsing, Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Jason Collis, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lee Dillon, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster

AGAINST the Motion: None

Abstained: Councillors Pamela Bale, Tim Metcalfe, Laszlo Zverko

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 7.42 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature