

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held at 7.25pm on 3rd February 2014 in the Committee Room, Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Samantha Bowring Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Angela Lawrence Deputy Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames
Cllr Alice Badcock
Cllr Marilyn Badcock
Cllr Michael Badcock
Cllr Lesley Legge
Cllr Patrick Lonergan
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer
Cllr Hermann Matheson
Cllr Helen Pighills
Cllr Andrew Todd

In Attendance

Mr Nigel Warner Town Clerk

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

C76 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jason Fiddaman; Jeanette Halliday; Iain Littlejohn; Monica Lovatt; Sandy Lovatt; Aidan Melville; Jan Morter; Katie Nobes; Lorraine Oates; and Alison Rooke.

C77 Declarations of interest

None.

C78 Public participation

None.

C79 Community Governance Review

The Council considered its response to the Community Governance Review being undertaken by the District Council.

Members debated the matter in some detail. There was a preference for a Council with an “odd number” of Members so that it was less likely that a group could not form an administration.

Members debated the relative merits of having 5 town wards, to be co-terminous with the District Council wards, and the 7 wards which were now in statute in the LGBC (Local Government Boundary Commission for England). Views were expressed which included a view that having different town and district wards could prove confusing for the electorate; an alternative view was that the district

wards were too large and they should all be sub-divided.

Whilst Members felt that the names of the District Council wards were not all ones which they would agree with, it was understood that these could not now be changed as they were in statute.

It was **resolved**:

1. That the Council wishes to retain a membership of 21 councillors (by 10 votes in favour and one abstention);
2. That the parish boundaries as set out in the final recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) (March 2013), which had now moved in to law, be adopted, i.e. 7 town wards for Abingdon (by 8 votes in favour and 3 against), subject to 3 (below).
3. It was noted that these town wards were based on the five district council wards, with two of these district council wards being divided in accordance with the county division boundaries which cross through Abingdon Fitzharris District Council ward and Abingdon Abbey Northcourt District Council ward. During the next phase of the review, it was resolved that the Town Council would wish to consider whether any of the remaining district council wards of Abingdon Caldecott, Abingdon Dunmore or Abingdon Peachcroft, should be sub-divided for parish purposes.
4. That the Council not agree with the new arrangements from the LGBCE that there be three members elected to serve each of the seven town wards as this would lead to an inequality of representation across the town wards.
5. That at the next stage of the community governance review the Town Council should look to allocate the 21 members across the seven (or more if further sub-division of the DC wards is proposed) wards, with the aim, as far as is possible, of making the number of members for each ward proportionate to the percentage of the parish's electorate in each ward. In that regard the Council requested the Town Clerk to ask the District Council for a breakdown of the number of electors in each of the 7 wards both now and also as projected over the coming years.
5. In relation to parish ward names, and having reference to the LGBCE's map showing their final recommendations, members considered that ward D, Fitzharris North, should be named Fitzharris Wildmoor; and ward E, Fitzharris South should be named Fitzharris Ock.

Members commented that they considered that the Oxfordshire reviews had been undertaken in the wrong order, with the county followed by the district and then the parishes. Members recognised that this was not in the District Council's control and that authority reviews were, it was understood, triggered by a request from the respective authority. Consequently Members were not sure that anything could be done about this without a change in the law, but asked the Town Clerk to write to the LGBCE to make that point.

The meeting rose at 8.30 pm.