

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Council held on 25 April 2018 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor B Heywood Chairman
Councillor R Woods Vice-Chairman

Councillor B Allen	Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor A P Hadley	Councillor I Jones
Councillor A Kingston-James	Councillor R Lillis
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	Councillor K Mills
Councillor C Morgan	Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor J Parbrook	Councillor P Pilkington
Councillor S Pugsley	Councillor R Thomas
Councillor N Thwaites	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor K Turner	Councillor T Venner
Councillor D J Westcott	

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)
Electoral Services Manager (E Day)
Electoral Services Manager - North Somerset Council (M Jones)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

C88 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Aldridge, R Clifford, H Davies, M Dewdney and S Dowding.

C89 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Cllr M Chilcott	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Kingston-James	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke and voted
Cllr C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All	Timberscombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr R Thomas	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke and voted
Cllr A H Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted

Cllr T Venner	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C90 **Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak at the meeting.

C91 **Warding Arrangements for the New Council**

(Report No. WSC 38/18, circulated prior to the Meeting.)

One of the important steps to be taken to prepare for the establishment of the new Council was for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake an Electoral Review of the area. The Structural Change Order (SCO) laid before parliament provided for a size of 58 councillors and so the focus was on agreeing a warding pattern for the distribution of the 58 councillors across the new Council area. Until the SCO is approved by parliament – probably late May/early June 2018 – the process would be handled by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The MHCLG had requested that any proposal for warding arrangements should be submitted to them by 4 May 2018 before the LGBCE commenced their formal review in June 2018 and this report provided the Council with the opportunity to agree to the submission of such a proposal.

The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy presented the item and highlighted key points from the report. The Lead Member stressed that the LGBCE would look to primarily achieve electoral equality and as a result wards had been created to meet this criterion. There were an additional two statutory criteria – reflecting community identities and interests; and providing for convenient and effective local government. It was noted that parishes and interested parties had been consulted and asked to comment on the possible arrangements; their views had, where possible, been incorporated into the report. Attention was drawn to Appendix A attached to the report which detailed the proposed warding arrangements for the new Council.

The Lead Member advised that individuals, groups, parish councils and any other interested parties would be entitled to put forward different views to the LGBCE during the public consultation period in July/August 2018.

At Taunton Deane Borough Council's special meeting on 23 April 2018, Members supported the options set out in Appendix A with one exception which was that the proposed two Member Wellington West and Rockwell Green ward should be split into a single Member Wellington South ward and a single Member Rockwell Green ward. It was confirmed that this would work within the overall numbers and would not affect the proposal.

The Lead Member stated that the complexity of the task undertaken by officers in drawing together the necessary figures, information and consultee comments should not be underestimated and, on behalf of the Council, the Lead Member took the opportunity to thank all concerned for the sympathetic and efficient way this had been achieved.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation, as amended to include reference to the two single Member wards in Wellington, which was duly seconded by Councillor A Trollope-Bellew.

Members were supportive of the proposal and the following main points were made during the discussion of this item:

- The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy was also thanked for his involvement in the process.
- It was felt the options set out in the proposal reflected the community's identity.
- Following a question on whether there was an opportunity for the new council to introduce a proportional representation system, it was clarified that the council did not have the authority to choose its own electoral system. The Electoral Commission administered the process nationally and it would require a change in legislation to change the current voting system.
- Specific reference was made to the arrangements to combine the Watchet and Williton wards into one with three Member seats, and it was acknowledged that it would not be feasible to keep the wards separate due to the electoral equality criterion not being met.
- It was pointed out that the parish boundaries would remain the same.

RESOLVED that the proposal, as set out in Appendix A to the report with the amendment regarding Wellington South and Rockwell Green, be submitted for consideration by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in regard to the proposed warding arrangement for the new Council area.

The meeting closed at 5.01 pm.