

# Regulatory & Appeals Committee Minutes

Date: 31 July 2019

Time: 7.00 - 7.50 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs L M Clarke OBE (in the Chair)

Councillors Z Ahmed, A D Collingwood, M Clarke, C Etholen, R Gaffney, M Hussain JP, I L McEnnis and R Raja, A R Green

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: J A Savage and Ms J D Wassell

\* Denotes Standing Deputy

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors K Ahmed, M Asif, S Graham and P Turner

## 1 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on 13 May 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 3 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members received a report on the Community Governance Review and noted that the bulk of the report had already been reviewed by the committee at a previous meeting. Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee was scheduled for 7 October, but because of the consultation was not due to end until 30 September, it was proposed to postpone the meeting until the end of October or early November to enable officer's to incorporate the results to bring before the committee.

The Chairman of the Community & Governance Review reported changes since the last meeting and reported that the LGRC conducted a fact finding review to address the four questions posed in the terms of reference which were raised by the four petitions submitted to council. The report also addressed the issue of the Mayoralty and Charter Trustees.

Table 1 showed the population and voter numbers for each District Ward of High Wycombe, the unparished area. It showed Totteridge rated as 5th, Sands rated as

6th and Micklefield rated as 8th of the ten wards, both in population and voter numbers.

Table 2 showed the town wards in order of increasing deprivation. Nothing in table showed that any of the wards stood out as significantly different.

Table 3 showed the age distribution across the population of each ward. None of the three petitioning wards stood out, with the exception of Totteridge which had the lowest percentage of 18 - 29 year olds. The differences between the ten wards were not significant.

Table 4 showed the ethnic diversity where the three petitioning wards occupied the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> places.

From the demographics set out in tables 1 to 4 there was nothing that made any of the petitioning wards stand out as different from the rest of the unparished area.

Table 5 showed the precept raised, by ward, including the Special Expenses portion of WDC Council Tax and the Charter Trustee charge. If the average charge, shown in paragraph 3.9 of the report, of £47.95 for a band D property a calculation was made that a total of £1.112 million would be raised.

The matter of the mayoralty was addressed and if:

a) there was a parishing of the whole of the unparished area the Charter Trustees and Mayoralty would cease to exist and their property, customs and usages would be transferred to the new council. That council could adopt the title of Mayor for their chairman and continue with the customs and usages currently in place.

or

b) if there was no or only a partial parishing of the unparished area then the Mayoralty would continue.

The recommendations at the end of the LGRC report had been properly argued and should be accepted as the basis of the consultation.

The following documents were reviewed by the working group and had been agreed as the basis of the public consultation:

- Options for High Wycombe Local Governance, an information sheet.
- Consultation Questionnaire which forms one of the four legs of the consultation process.

Both of these documents would be available on the Council's website and in paper form on request.

Some concern was raised as to whether the Shadow Authority could reject the recommendation. It was noted that if they did approve a parish council of any kind, then funds would need to be put aside for processes such as electoral arrangements etc. Concern was also raised in relation to the potential cost to

residents in setting up a new council. It was also noted that should the Shadow Executive make the decision, they would need to comply with requirements of the regulations.

It was noted that the options as laid out in the report could not be changed as they were driven by the petitions that had been received and had previously been agreed.

Mr Dale Hall of Opinion Research Services (ORS) confirmed that the consultation would be held to gauge the strength of opinion of residents and that Council could then make recommendations to the Shadow Executive for the ultimate decision.

Following some concern in relation to the number of residents to be contacted, it was noted that there was a small difference in percentage responses whether 800 or 1000 were questioned. A wide balance of residents would be canvassed and once a certain number of one part of that balance was reached, no further engagement of those, for example, over 65 year olds, would be contacted.

Following the debate, it was,

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and the following decision agreed:

- i) Receive the report from LGRC on the initial fact finding exercise;
- ii) Agree the proposed options for consultation; and
- iii) Agree the consultation process to be followed.

Councillor A Collingwood wished it to be noted that he voted in favour of parts i) and ii) above, but that he voted against part iii).

The point was raised that it was agreed at the last meeting of the committee that comments or concerns could be submitted, in writing, to officers and that this had been done in some cases. However, it was noted that these concerns had not been included in the report. It was reported that some documentation had been produced but following Counsel's opinion being sought the documents on which comments had been made were withdrawn.

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Chairman

**The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

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| Liz Hornby | - Senior Democratic Services Officer |
| Ian Hunt   | - Democratic Services Manager        |
| Matt Rae   | - Electoral Services Manager         |