

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

8 September 2021 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor N.A. Dudley (Chair)

Councillors K. Bentley, D.G. Jones, M.S Steel, N.M. Walsh, R.T. Whitehead, and
T.N. Willis

Also in attendance –

City Councillors, Chambers, D Clark, Lee, Potter and Robinson

Parish Councillors V Chiswell, P Jackson and J Saltmarsh

Independent Persons –
Mrs C Gosling and Mrs P Mills

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ayres, Thorpe Apps and Wright. Councillors Steel, Whitehead and Willis were their substitutes.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 16 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made. In relation to the community governance review item, it is a matter of public record which area any parish and city councillors in attendance at the meeting represent and there was no need for declarations to be made in this regard.

4. Public Question Time

The Chair of Little Waltham Parish Council made a statement at the meeting. The Committee heard that the Parish Council was disappointed that they had only

recently been notified of the meeting and that part of their representation had not been shown in the report.

Officers did clarify however, that all Parish Councils always, receive notice of all Council meetings when agendas are published and that it had been a formatting error that caused part of the representation to be missing. The Committee also heard that this had since been resolved and the full representation had been made available online.

The Committee also heard of concerns from Little Waltham Parish Council that the proposals included anomalies which needed to be rectified. It was noted that the view of the Parish Council was that residents of Channels had expressed the wish that Channels should be wholly within the parish area. The Committee also heard that the new garden community should have its own parish rather than being incorporated into an existing one.

The Parish Council felt that another planned development at Blasford Hill would have its main impact on residents of Little Waltham and that the proposal should be amended so that all of the new houses were within Little Waltham. It was noted by the Committee that officers would respond to these points when discussing the area later in the meeting.

5. Chair's Announcements

No Announcements were made

6. Community Governance Review

The Committee received a report which detailed the draft recommendations following the initial consultation for the Community Governance Review, these were for discussion by the Committee and then a recommendation to Full Council. Richard Beesley, the Council's external consultant for the Community Governance Review took the Committee through the formal processes which had led to this stage. He also informed the Committee, that he was external to the Council, with no vested interest and no prior knowledge of the area, therefore the recommendations were based on the consultation responses.

It was noted that the report was based on a consultation earlier in 2020, which had received a large number of responses, but it had to be noted that they were not representative of everybody's views. The Committee was informed that an assessment of those responses and a review of the current arrangements had taken place through working group meetings at the Council. It was noted by the Committee, that the initial consultation had been a blank sheet exercise, which often leads to residents only responding if they have a particular view on an area. The Committee heard that the draft recommendations were a balancing act based on the consultation responses and in some situations where those responses had been submitted from. It was also clarified that the review is not able to consider other issues such as City wards, County Divisions or Parliamentary Constituencies.

The Committee were taken through each area in turn and informed of any changes or if there were not any proposals being recommended. The recommendations are detailed in the report that was considered by the Committee.

It was clarified by officers that there had been a printing error on the Little Waltham section of the report and that the views of Little Waltham parish council had been considered by the working group ahead of the recommendations being considered at committee. In response to the concerns raised by Little Waltham Parish Council, officers confirmed that the comments would be noted and that the next round of targeted consultation would allow local bodies and residents to express their views on the draft recommendations before any final decision was made.

In relation to the Blasford Hill site it was explained that the new development would straddle the existing boundary line and three options had been considered. It was noted that it was a difficult balancing act as the development has not taken place and where nobody yet knew how the residents would feel. The Committee heard that the recommended proposal was for the whole area to become part of Broomfield Parish. It was noted that by now having a proposal to put forward, it would allow residents and the parish councils to respond further. The Committee heard that there had been a fairly consistent view that the new garden community area should have its own Parish Council. It was noted that there had been some differing views on where exactly the boundary line should sit though. The Committee heard that the middle of the road had been picked as a starting point that would allow everyone in the area to be consulted on specifically along with the Parish Councils, this would allow any historic property issues to be picked up on.

A local ward member also asked a question regarding the Boreham airfield site which would be moved from the Boreham Parish area by the new proposals. The Committee heard it was an important heritage site and should stay aligned with the Boreham parish area. It was noted by the Committee and the ward member was reminded that the next stage of the consultation would be important for picking this and similar issues up.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that targeted consultations would take place in areas with proposed changes and respondents views would be taken into account.

The Committee were informed of a slight change to the report, regarding the Chichester Drive area of Springfield. It was now being proposed that this would be part of Springfield Parish as it would not be accessible going forwards from the Trinity parish ward.

The Committee confirmed they were happy with the draft recommendations as detailed as well as the slight amendment proposed at the meeting, being recommended to Full Council. Officers confirmed that the next stage of the process was for Full Council to agree the recommendations before the next round of consultation could then take place.

RESOLVED that

1. the outcome of the initial formal consultation be noted and;
2. the Committee recommends the Draft Recommendations of the Community Governance Review (including the slight amendment in relation to the Chichester Drive area) for approval by Council for the second and final stage of public consultation.

(7.10 pm to 7.41 pm)

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.42pm.

Chair