

**Draft minutes of the special meeting of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2012 at 7.00pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon**

**Present:**

Cllr Monica Lovatt	Mayor
Cllr Andrew Todd	Deputy Mayor
Cllr Alice Badcock	
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	
Cllr Michael Badcock	
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Jason Fiddaman	
Cllr Lesley Legge	
Cllr Iain Littlejohn	
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	
Cllr Hermann Matheson	
Cllr Penny McDougall	
Cllr Katie Nobes	
Cllr Alison Rooke	

**In attendance:**

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
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40. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jeanette Halliday, Peter Jones, Angela Lawrence, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Aidan Melville and Helen Pighills.

41. **Declarations of Interest**

The Town Clerk confirmed that the advice from the District Council Monitoring Officer is that membership of other local authorities is not deemed to be a declarable pecuniary interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

42. **Electoral Review of Vale of White Horse**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Members were requested to consider the Council's response to the consultation from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in relation to the next phase of the electoral review of the Vale of White Horse. This had previously been circulated but is attached for information.

A District Council meeting was being held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012, and the report of the Chief Executive of the District Council had been circulated with the agenda. The proposals in the

report had come forward from a working group of the District and proposed that Abingdon be divided into 10 single Member wards for the District Council.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, stated that the Conservative group had discussed this matter and would be proposing that town be divided into five wards. He believed that these wards reflected the natural boundaries between communities and also had the advantage of creating ward teams. His group would also be proposing that the Town Council reduce in number from 21 to 19 members, with four members in each ward with the exception of the smallest ward, Northcourt, which would have three members.

Cllr Alison Rooke, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group, stated that her group would be tabling a proposal for Abingdon to be split into 10 wards. This proposal was different to that which was being considered by the District Council and she considered that it achieved better co-terminosity with the county divisions. The Liberal Democrat proposal would result in a Town Council with 20 members, i.e. two per ward.

The Council then considered the proposed ward structure which was being considered by the District Council at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive to that meeting and which had emerged from a Vale Working Group. This divided Abingdon into 10 wards, with two district councillors per ward. It was proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke, seconded by Cllr Michael Badcock and **resolved** that the Town Council not support this proposal.

It was then proposed by Cllr Alison Rooke and seconded by Cllr Lesley Legge that the Town Council adopt the 10 ward model as tabled by Cllr Rooke which would result in single member wards for Abingdon. In making this proposal, Cllr Rooke stated that this ward structure was aligned to the natural communities in Abingdon, but that it was impossible to be completely co-terminous with the county divisions. In supporting this, a Member stated that the starting point of this ward structure had been the county divisions and detailed work had taken place to ensure electoral equality between the different wards. A number of Members opposed this proposal, stating that the ward boundaries did not align with natural communities, for example there was a ward boundary through the Albert Park and Saxton Road was split into three separate wards. A Member stated that the one member per ward approach may be suitable for rural wards but within a town it was preferable to have multi-member wards. On being put to the vote this proposal was lost with four in favour, ten against and one abstention.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt then made a proposal that the District Council adopt a five ward structure for Abingdon. This was based on a previous proposal which had been discussed by the Vale's Working Group, with the exception that the boundary between the Fitzharris and the Central Ward be changed so that it is co-terminous with the Wootton Road; this would have the advantage of producing a better natural boundary and would also make the numbers of electors in these two wards more even. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Marilyn Badcock. In considering this matter, a Member stated that the proposed names needed to be looked at; for example the Central Ward was not really central in terms of the town's geography.

*(Cllr Patrick Lonergan left the meeting at this point, it being 8pm).*

On being put to the vote, the proposal was adopted by eleven votes in favour to three votes against and it was

**Resolved:**

1. That the Town Council favours the creation of five wards in the town, each being represented by two District Councillors, and that this view be put forward at the District Council meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012 (see map attached to the appendix to the minutes of 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012 with ward boundary following Wootton Road) ;
2. That following the meeting and decision of the District Council regarding their favoured option that the Town Council reconvene to consider its final submission in relation to this matter at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

The meeting rose at 8.05 pm.