

## CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

### GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 16 April 2024  
at 7.00 pm in The Guildhall, St Peter's Place, Westgate, Canterbury

#### Present:

Councillor James Flanagan (Chair)  
Councillor Alister Brady (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Dane Buckman  
Councillor Pat Edwards  
Councillor Peter Old  
Councillor Naomi Smith  
Councillor Ian Stockley  
Councillor Jeanette Stockley  
Councillor Steven Wheeler

#### In attendance:

Councillor Michael Dixey

#### Officers:

Matthew Archer- Head of Corporate Governance  
Andrea James - Democratic Services Officer

#### 688. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 689. Substitute members

There were no substitutes members present.

#### 690. Declarations of interest by Members or Officers

A general declaration was made on behalf of committee members to the effect that some members of the committee may know, or have received correspondence from, or have spoken with, some of the public speakers due to their work as councillors.

There were no further declarations.

#### 691. Public participation

There were 6 public speakers who were heard at the start of the relevant item.

#### 692. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 December 2023 and 29 January 2024 were agreed as a true record, by general assent.

#### 693. Petition for a Whitstable Town Council Community Governance Review - Response to

## Stage 1 Consultation

The Head of Corporate Governance introduced the report, which considered the consultation feedback from Stage 1 of the Community Governance Review, responding to the petition for a Whitstable Town Council. He outlined the extent of the consultation that had taken place and explained how the advisory group had reached its conclusions.

The Committee discussed the recommendations and the following points were made, with the Head of Corporate Governance giving clarification where necessary:

- The term 'governance review' may have been confusing for some residents, who would not have known that the consultation concerned the possibility of setting up a town council.
- Some people thought they would ultimately get to vote on whether to have a town council or not, so did not engage with the consultation process.
- Gorrell was a single ward and splitting it, even for illustrative purposes to show differences in views within the ward, was not appropriate.
- The heat maps showed that views in Gorrell were split. This was the largest ward and the only one where this pattern was observed. The advisory group chose to take this into account.
- It had been made clear that this was not a referendum. It was up to residents to decide whether to respond to the consultation.
- Several members of the General Purposes Committee had sat on the Governance Review Working Group, and had found the process and consultation had been very informative and valuable in developing the debate.
- The Working Group had been asked to look at a specific area and a specific question. The Council had spent money on contacting people in that area by various means and the return in terms of respondents was quite good, as far as consultations went. The answer to the question asked had been 'no'.
- The difference in results in the two different areas of Gorrell had been marked and worth highlighting. The intention was to explain the difference to be transparent about how the advisory group had assessed the data.
- Some people consulted had felt Canterbury City Council was trying to force this change on them.
- The Council could not cherry pick the data to come up with a different result.
- During stage 2 of the process, representatives of the Council would continue to have discussions with the petitioners / CT5 supporters if invited.
- The Council could look at other ways to support the aim of more local representation for Whitstable, and page 20 of the report suggested some ways to do this.
- A local forum was an option, but the previous local forum supported by the Council had been abolished, partly on cost and capacity grounds. The Council leadership would need to look at capacity and budget availability, probably as part of a wider report that also considered other options.
- Stage 2 of the consultation process would need to ask people to give evidence for their arguments.
- The 'no' result had been a surprise to some councillors, but it was a true result and the Council could not restructure a consultation it had already had.
- The Council definitely wanted to still hear suggestions about how it could work better with that part of the community and those groups that didn't feel they were being reached and included.
- Efforts had been made to reach as many residents as possible in the consultation, and every household in CT5 had been written to and three public events held. The Council had also used its social media channels, with a theoretical 35,000 reach, to get messages out.
- The next stage would be to invite comments on the draft recommendations.
- The Council should go back to people who engaged with the first consultation and

then widening the net to try to engage people who didn't engage. Engagement was habit forming.

- The consultation would not just be limited to Whitstable; anyone from across the district could comment if they wished.

An amendment to Item 1: iv was proposed and seconded, so that it would read as follows:

'That a smaller parished area covering Gorrell and Tankerton be recommended for further consideration as a town council.'

When put to the vote, the proposed amendment FELL.

Record of the voting:

For (1): Councillor Wheeler

Against (7): Councillors Brady, Buckman, Edwards, Old, N.Smith, I.Stockley, J.Stockley

Abstained (1): Flanagan

It was proposed, seconded, and when put to the vote RECOMMENDED to Council:

1. That feedback is sought on the following draft recommendations -

Based on the findings of the consultation, the advisory group has not recommended an alternative boundary for a smaller town council.

Instead, it recommends a qualitative approach inviting comments, opinion and evidence which supports or disproves the following four propositions:

*i. That a parishing of the whole CT5 area does not represent the interest of the community given the lack of public support.*

*ii. That the splitting of wards in Gorrell will damage community cohesion by forcing only some in an area to pay for largely shared services and resources.*

*iii. That a smaller parished area covering Harbour & Tankerton lacks community cohesion given the lack of public support and distinct unique identity of both settlements, therefore is not recommended.*

*iv. That a smaller parished area covering Harbour & Tankerton will neither be effective or convenient in achieving the original aims of the petition to create a single 'voice for Whitstable' and incapable of delivering the range of projects presented by the petitioning organisation.*

2. That feedback is obtained through written representations using the means set out in the report.

3. That the revised timetable be approved

Record of the voting:

For (8): Councillors Brady, Buckman, Edwards, Flanagan, Old, N.Smith, I.Stockley and

J.Stockley  
Against (1): Councillor Wheeler  
Abstained (0):

694. Any other urgent business to be dealt with in public

There was no urgent business.

695. Exclusion of the press and public

This item was not required.

696. Any other urgent business which falls under the exempt provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or both

There was no urgent business which fell under the exempt provisions.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 20.13.