

MINUTE 88 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Halberton Parish Council seeks to look after all its parishioners throughout this large, historic, and predominantly, rural parish.

The newsletter is delivered to all households and issues raised are dealt with expediently - speeding concerns at Lucombe Park, uncut verges, dirty bus shelters, potholes, parking issues at Mid Devon Business Park, disruption caused when the A361 is closed, concerns over AD plants or solar panel farms or the ability to walk to work at Hitchcocks from both Uffculme and Willand.

Halberton Parish Council considers all planning applications based on the 'material planning considerations' and is not adverse to raising questions, asking for conditions or requesting that an application is called in. Ultimately though, it is MDDC Planning Officers and Planning Committee who make the decisions.

In addition, Halberton Parish Council has reached out to its neighbours on issues that affect the combined area such as standardised speed limits throughout.

Last year, the District Boundaries Commission Review, saw Uffculme and Willand ask for changes particularly in relation to the parish of Halberton. The Boundaries Commission rejected these requests on the premise that it would unbalance the numbers.

A year later, the Parish Boundary Review committee is asking for the same changes. So before making your decision ask yourselves: Who was on the Parish Boundary Review committee?

Does the number of responses reflect the majority of the population of the three parishes (6534)? And, how many of those responses came from residents within the parish of Halberton?

Would MDDC Planning Officers or the Planning Committee have come to a different conclusion on any planning application if Uffculme or Willand Parish Council had objected? Will the next step be to invoke Clause 61 of the District Boundaries Commission Review?

Having considered the questions above, if the Council is mindful to adopt one of the three Options put forward, I for one would hope that those individuals who specified they wished to remain in the Parish of Halberton will be allowed to do so.

Response

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) concluded its review of the Mid Devon District Boundary Review in January 2021. During the period of that review the Commission considered a whole range of proposals submitted to then affecting a number of neighbouring areas and as whilst a number of those submissions were rejected at that time partly because of the Commissions desire to find a balance in the number of electors per councillor were within an acceptable electoral variance across the whole of the District Council Area.

As a result of the District Review, recognising the difficulties surrounding the Halberton, Uffculme and Willand parish council areas, the Commission requested the Council undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR), which it did so in December 2021. Paragraph 61 of the Commissions Review is set out below:

“61 We do note that several of these submissions discussed the problems that the current parish boundaries have upon local governance in this area. We consider that a community governance review, carried out by the Council after the completion of this electoral review, would be the most effective way to effect parish boundary changes in this area. A request for related alterations following a community governance review would then provide the Council with an opportunity to modify district wards so that they are coterminous with any revised parish boundaries.”

It is wrong to say that the proposal Of Option 3 of the Electoral Review Committee is the same as the areas that the Boundary Commission rejected.

The membership of the Electoral Review Committee if published in all Agendas and Minutes of that Committee.

You refer to the number of “how many of those responses came from residents within the parish of Halberton?”. Of the 61 submissions submitted relating to the ‘options’, there were only 3 that opposed all of the options.

The Council’s decision at the Meeting was to only approve Option 2 (which embraces Option 1).