

CGR 3

Parishes Affected

Abingdon-on-Thames

Matter to be considered

Reviewing the allocation of councillors to and the names of parish wards

Impact on district and county council boundaries

None

Summary of parish council responses

Abingdon-on-Thames town council has requested that we review the allocation of councillors made by the LGBC to each parish ward and rename two of the parish wards.

Summary of other responses

None

Recommendation

To rename Fitzharris North parish ward as Fitzharris Wildmoor

To rename Fitzharris South parish ward as Fitzharris Ock

To reduce the number of councillors for Abingdon-on-Thames town council from 21 to 19 and to allocate them by parish ward as follows:

Abbey	2
Caldecott	4
Dunmore	4
Fitzharris Ock	2
Fitzharris Wildmoor	1
Northcourt	2
Peachcroft	4

Justification

The town council considers that the references to Wildmoor and Ock are better than the suffixes of north and south for the two Fitzharris wards and the working group agrees with this.

The current number of councillors in Abingdon-on-Thames is 21. The LGBC proposed allocating them equally across the seven parish wards it created as part of its electoral review of the Vale – three per ward. If we implemented this it would lead to a very unequal distribution of electorate to councillors – ranging from 565 electors per councillor in Fitzharris Wildmoor to 1915 per councillor in Caldecott.

The working group has looked at a fairer allocation but concluded that an equitable distribution is difficult to achieve with 21 councillors. It has suggested 19 or 23 and Abingdon-on-Thames town council has indicated a preference for 19. This would give a spread of electors per councillor from 1142 in Abbey to 1696 in Fitzharris Wildmoor

NALC guidance is that councils with an electorate of 23,000 or more (Abingdon's is just under 26,000) should have 25 councillors. However, a quick review of a range of other town councils in the general area that are above the 23,000 threshold – Andover, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Newbury and Witney – show that none have 25 councillors. They are in a range 15 to 23. Andover town council is particularly relevant as it is newly formed (2010) and has a population very similar to Abingdon-on-Thames. It also has 19 councillors.

Having taken all relevant factors into account the working group considers that 19 councillors is the appropriate number for Abingdon-on-Thames. The distribution by parish ward is equitable.