BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors G Luter (Chair), K T Blundell, M Boylan, N A Dugmore, N A M England and R A Overton

In Attendance: A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), M Wallace (Member Support Officer) and D Thomas-White (Interim Head of Registrars, Legal & Democracy) and J Power (Head of Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections)

Apologies: Councillors Z Hannington

BRC1 Declarations of Interest

None.

BRC2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BRC3 Terms of Reference Report

The Director: Policy & Governance presented Terms of Reference for the 2026/27 municipal year. Members were advised that at the Annual Council meeting in May 2026, delegated authority had been granted to each Committee to review their Terms of Reference.

The Committee heard that there had been no proposed changes to the Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix A of the report.

Following the update Members voted on the recommendation.

RESOLVED - that the Terms of Reference set out be agreed and reconfirmed for the 2026/27 municipal year.

BRC4 Update on Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review and Community Governance Review

The Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections provided an update on the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review.

Members were reminded of the terminology used within the review, explaining that a polling district was the geographical area, a polling place was the

building or location designated for voting and a polling station was the specific area within the polling place where voting takes place.

Members were advised of the legislative requirements for designation, including the requirement for each parish to form a separate polling district unless special circumstances applied. The Council must designate a polling place for each polling district and ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that polling places were accessible to disabled voters. Polling places should also be of an appropriate size and location to enable electors to reasonably access their polling station.

It was noted that the consultation period had now concluded and no further formal submissions had been received. Members heard that Officers had met with the Making it Real Board to undertake visits to several polling stations to better understand the experiences of voters with disabilities and visual impairments. Learning from recent by-elections had also helped inform the review, particularly in relation to accessibility issues experienced by wheelchair users. At the time of the meeting, Officers had considered whether the identified issues could be mitigated or whether alternative polling stations would better meet accessibility requirements.

Proposed next steps included preparing draft interim findings, convening a Member workshop to consider the findings and any potential mitigations, reporting recommendations back to the Committee, seeking Full Council approval in November 2026 and publishing the updated electoral register in December 2026 ahead of the implementation of new boundaries in 2027.

The Committee thanked Officers for their work on the review and welcomed the proposal for a workshop to consider potential mitigations in detail before recommendations were brought back to the Committee.

The Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections provided an update on the Community Governance Review.

Members were advised that further information had now been received from the remaining Parish Council that had not previously responded. Officers had continued to engage with Town and Parish Councils required to establish shadow arrangements and had met with several parish clerks. Final maps and street lists had been prepared and information relating to expected assets, liabilities and council tax base allocations were in the process of being finalised and shared with relevant councils.

Members recognised the significant amount of work undertaken by Officers and asked how project-specific funds would be dealt with where parish boundaries changed.

In response, the Committee were advised that the treatment of funds would depend on how they were reflected in council accounts. Where funds had been specifically allocated to a project, it would generally be expected that those funds would transfer with responsibility for delivering that project,

supported by an appropriate audit trail. It was explained that each case would require consideration of its individual circumstances.

The Committee also asked whether there were any timescales for engagement with affected Members and sought clarification on how assets, including buildings and cash balances would be apportioned between existing and new parish councils.

The Committee were advised that affected Members had been offered meetings, although there had been limited uptake. Further discussions were expected to take place in the coming weeks and the offer of engagement remained open. In relation to assets and liabilities, there was no prescribed legal formula for division. Existing and shadow councils would be encouraged to negotiate and reach local agreement. Where agreement could not be reached, the matter would ultimately return to the Council for determination. The Director: Policy & Governance explained that financial balances and assets would be considered together and that each case would be assessed individually.

The Committee asked for clarification regarding communications with parish clerks and whether information had been shared with all affected councils.
It was confirmed that information had been provided where necessary, particularly to councils involved in establishing shadow arrangements. Where information had already been supplied by one authority, it had not routinely been resent to the originating council. All councils requiring shadow arrangements had been notified and provided with guidance. Questions raised had been addressed and support offered where required. It was also explained that not all councils affected by boundary changes required shadow councils, as some would only experience boundary amendments rather than the dissolution or creation of councils.

Members were advised that information regarding council tax base changes, gains and losses to areas and other governance implications would be shared with the relevant councils. Existing councils would continue normal business and make decisions regarding future events and services while arrangements were developed.

The Committee noted the updates contained in the presentation.

BRC5 Update on the Representation of the People Bill

The Director: Policy & Governance presented an update on the Representation of the People Bill, outlining a number of proposed electoral reforms. These included more automated forms of voter registration, lowering the voting age to 16 for all UK elections, expanding the range of accepted voter identification, strengthening political finance controls, providing greater protection for candidates from abuse and harassment and strengthening enforcement of political finance laws.

Members were advised that around eight million eligible voters nationally were estimated not to be registered. Proposed automatic registration measures could include prompting registration through other public services such as passport or driving licence applications or linking electoral registration to other public sector systems. Reference was made to pilot schemes undertaken in Wales in 2025, which resulted in more than 14,500 electors being added to electoral registers.

The Committee received an overview of proposals to lower the voting age to 16. It was noted that this would align voting rights across the UK with arrangements already in place within some devolved administrations and could affect approximately 1.7 million young people. Research suggested that voting at a younger age could increase long-term electoral participation and encourage wider engagement among family members. Members also discussed the importance of democratic education and ensuring that young people understood the registration and voting process. Questions were raised about the forms of identification available to younger voters.

Members were informed that proposals to expand acceptable voter identification could include allowing the use of bank cards, digital voter authority certificates and other digital forms of identification. The concept of "vouching", whereby a registered elector with suitable identification could confirm the identity of another elector was also discussed. Additionally, reforms were proposed to improve candidate safety, including measures to prevent publication of candidates' home addresses and stronger protections from harassment and abuse.

The Committee also received an update on flexible voting arrangements, which sat outside the Bill but were being explored nationally through pilot schemes. Options included advance voting centres, mobile polling stations, voting at alternative polling stations, voting hubs and the ability to vote at any polling station within a defined electoral area. Officers advised that pilot schemes had taken place in several authorities during May 2026 and that outcomes were awaited.

Members noted that flexible voting arrangements could provide benefits for elderly residents, those with accessibility needs and electors who may otherwise face practical barriers to voting, while acknowledging that some proposals were likely to generate debate.

The Committee noted the update.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

Chairman: ----------

Date: Monday 9 November 2026