

BCFE (08) 14th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 28 October and
Wednesday 29 October 2008 at 3pm at One Great George
Street, London, SW1P 3AA

Present:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Professor Ron Johnston
Jane Earl
Professor Colin Mellors (29 October only)

Also present:

Archie Gall	Director	
Elizabeth Morrow		Lawyer
Graham Essex-Crosby		Local Government Adviser (items 1-5, 12-14)
Sam Hartley		Review Manager (items 6-14)
Richard Buck		Review Manager (items 6-12)
Alison Wildig	Review	Manager (items 1-5, 12-14)
Paul Kingsley		Review Adviser (items 6-12)
William Morrison		Review Officer (Norfolk) (items 1-5, 12-14)
Kalim Anwer	Review	Officer (Suffolk) (items 1-5, 12-14)
Tim Bowden	Review	Officer (Devon) (items 1-5, 12-14)
Jessica Metherringham		Review Officer (West Sussex/Durham) (items 6-12)
Arion Lawrence		Review Officer (Shrops/Northumberland) (items 6-12)
James Ansell		Review Officer (Wiltshire) (items 6-12)
Megan Bayford		Review Assistant

**1. Minutes of the last meeting: 6 and 7 October 2008 BCFE (08)
13th Meeting**

1.1 In paragraph 3.3, delete the phrases “one ratio” and “one only”.

1.2 In paragraph 5.5, correct the word to “meetings”.

1.3 In paragraph 11.2, remove the word “which”

[REDACTED]

1.5 With these amendments, the minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Committee agreed to amend the agenda to move Items 6 and 7 to the end.

3. Structural reviews: legal update – oral report

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3.5 It was noted that there had been a Freedom of Information (FOI) request concerning Committee members who had declared interests at two particular Committee meetings.

4. Structural reviews: notes of roundtables – BCFE (08) 44

- 4.1 The Committee commended the Review Team and noted that the notes were an accurate and thorough representation of the roundtable meetings with the public, private and voluntary sectors in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk. The Committee agreed that the notes reflected that the meetings gave a positive image of the Committee being actively engaged with people in the area and provided a constructive forum for feedback, including those who were more hesitant to make formal representations. The Committee noted that it would be useful to also capture the clear stakeholder view that 'no change' would be the worst outcome of the review as this was expressed almost unanimously in all roundtable discussions.
- 4.2 A correction was made to the paper - Jane Earl was not present at the meeting in Barnstaple.
- 4.3 The Chair also requested that notes from other meetings with non-local authority stakeholders not organised by the Committee should also be circulated.

5. Structural reviews: financial consultants' generic report – BCFE (08) 45

- 5.1 The Review Manager presented a paper on the financial consultants' generic report.
- 5.2 The Committee discussed the report's layout and content. Some suggestions were made to improve the generic report by using plain English and avoiding acronyms.
- 5.3 The Committee requested that, when the final reports are submitted to it, the information be presented at headline level, then in detail for each of the individual patterns. It also requested that the common factors that influence the outcomes across the counties to be highlighted to allow the Committee to have a sense of the main issues. The Committee requested commentary on whether there is a material difference between the three counties in terms of the approaches to the assumptions underpinning the financial data.
- 5.4 The final reports will be presented at the Committee meeting on 19 November. The Committee noted that it would likely take an entire day to go through them thoroughly, including questioning the consultants.
- 5.5 A Committee member questioned the inclusion of asset change costs in the workbooks, and the Review Manager confirmed they were outlined in localisation costs.

6. Electoral reviews: Cornwall scheme – BCFE (08) 47

- 6.1 The Review Adviser presented a report on the Cornwall electoral review.
- 6.2 After discussion regarding the Threemilestone area, the Committee endorsed the proposals for the Truro CNA.
- 6.3 Some concerns were expressed about the proposed St Issey division in the Wadebridge area. The Committee agreed that in the absence of community evidence, common sense and logic needed to be used in establishing practical borders. The Committee confirmed that both options for divisions in this area should be referred to in its draft recommendations report, but adopted Option 1 as its draft recommendation.
- 6.4 The Committee discussed the area of Launceston and whether the worsening of electoral equality would justify one parish breaching the Implementation Executive's proposed community network area. The Committee agreed to the proposed option.
- 6.5 The Committee agreed to the proposed divisions in the China Clay and St Austell area.
- 6.6 The Committee expressed gratitude and appreciation for the Review Adviser's hard work on the Cornwall electoral review, acknowledging it is the largest electoral review in terms of the number of electoral areas that the Committee have ever undertaken.
- 6.7 The Director confirmed that there was extra time built into the timetable if periods of further consultation on particular contentious areas were needed.

7. Electoral reviews: Wiltshire further consultation – BCFE (08) 48

- 7.1 Professor Ron Johnston declared an interest in the Wiltshire review and took no part in the Committee's discussions.
- 7.2 The Review Officer presented a paper on the further consultation in Wiltshire.
- 7.3 The Committee agreed to its proposed modifications in Amesbury.
- 7.4 It was confirmed that a community governance review in the Chippenham area will not take place until after the final recommendations are implemented. The Committee agreed to the proposed modifications in Chippenham.
- 7.5 There was some discussion that, in future, proposals should not carry the name of their proponents – i.e., the "Councillor Groom proposal" for the

- 7.6 The Review Officer reported that in mid-October, Wiltshire County Council advised the Committee that some of its mapping for the Warminster area was incorrect but that the electorate data was correct. If the mapping, as detailed in the draft recommendations were used, it would result in a 45% electoral variance. Accordingly, it was imperative that the Committee either adopt the revised mapping or formulate alternative arrangements for the town.
- 7.7 The Director presented the Committee with two options: 1) to revise the draft proposals and go out to further consultation for 4 weeks, and the effect of which would be to make implementation by next year's elections impossible; or 2) modify the draft recommendations and report directly to the Electoral Commission flagging the changes and inviting any representations to be made directly to the Electoral Commission. The risk with Option 2 was that the Electoral Commission may reject the Committee's recommendations and advise that consultation is necessary before they will consider the revised proposals.
- 7.8 The Director said there was no obligation under the Act to go out to further consultation, it had merely been a common practice of the Committee and it was noted that there had been examples of corrections to mapping in the past, albeit less significant to that now proposed. The Director advised that Option 2 might be preferable given the above, as long as the Committee were fully transparent about how the situation had arisen.
- 7.9 The Committee agreed and advised that measures to publicise this error should be taken. The Committee agreed that, given the timescales, appropriate electoral arrangements for Warminster be agreed by the two Deputy Commissioners for Wiltshire (Robin Gray and Jane Earl).
- 7.10 There was some discussion about the area of Harnham, near Salisbury. Committee members had visited the area and were of the view that alternative electoral arrangements needed to be explored as part of the final recommendations. Given the timescales, it was agreed that officers write a briefing paper for the Chair on a possible alternative for the eastern part of Harnham. The Chair would then determine whether there is justification for moving away from the draft recommendations in this area, which were formally confirmed as final at the 25 September meeting of the Committee.

8. Electoral reviews: Shropshire further consultation – BCFE (08) 49

- 8.1 The Review Officer presented a paper on the further consultation in Shropshire.

- 8.2 The Committee adopted the proposal for two single-member divisions for Broseley and Much Wenlock and a pattern of three single-member divisions for Albrighton and its hinterland..
- 8.3 The Review Officer reported that the majority of representations for the area of Bayston Hill had not expressed support for either of the Committee's proposed options, The majority of respondents either opposed the alternative option on the basis of support for a single-member Bayston Hill division or a lack of commonality between Bayston Hill and the parishes to the south.
- 8.4 In the absence of evidence to support the alternative option on which the Committee sought further views, it was agreed that a three-member Bayston Hill, Column & Sutton division, as per the draft recommendations, should be confirmed as final.

9. Electoral reviews: West Sussex further consultation – BCFE (08)50

- 9.1 The Review Officer presented a paper on further consultation in West Sussex.
- 9.2 On the basis of evidence provided during the further consultation process, The Committee agreed to confirm Option 2 for the Littlehampton division as part of its final recommendations .
- 9.3 The Committee agreed to adopt Option 2 for the area of Billingshurst that would see Ashington parish located in a revised Storrington ward and a Billingshurst division minus Ashington but with the inclusion of Itchingfield parish.

10. Electoral reviews: Durham council size

- 10.1 The Review Officer confirmed that the Chair and Professor Mellors had arranged to meet the Leader and Chief Executive of Durham Council, together with key councillors, on 17 December 2008. The Council had sent a number of timetables and other documents, only some of which were relevant to the Committee. The Review Officer agreed to report back to the Committee in due course on these. .

11. Electoral reviews: Northumberland council size

- 11.1 The Review Officer updated the Committee on formal communication received from the Chief Executive of Northumberland Council. The Council maintained its support for a council size of 79 yet felt there was no further evidence available to support this. The Council therefore proposed a council size of 67.

11.2 The Committee agreed that a meeting similar to that for County Durham be arranged with Northumberland Council, ideally on or around the same date as the other meeting.

12. Structural reviews: consultation analysis tool demonstration

12.1 The Review Officer (Suffolk) made a presentation of the consultation analysis tool.

12.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- The consultation phase had been an open invitation for representations on the draft proposal reports rather than a 'closed and structured questionnaire'; hence responses should be considered as essentially 'qualitative' rather than 'quantitative' evidence.
- The main value of the responses was in providing the Committee with reflections from a wide range of interested parties—individuals, representative bodies (i.e., parish and town councils) and other stakeholders.
- it was recognised that the Committee would need to exercise some discretion in evaluating responses since a number, inevitably, were received in the form of 'standard' letters or campaigns.
- Nevertheless, it would be helpful to capture:
 - key headline messages conveyed from responses
 - breakdowns by location and type of respondent
- Although the analysis should not drive the Committee's judgments, it would provide a helpful context for the Committee to consider its draft recommendations, especially with respect to the 'broad cross-section of support' criteria.

12.3 The issues relating to the Data Protection Act were identified and advice was sought.

12.4 The Committee discussed the timetable for logging the representations. The Review Manager estimated it would take approximately three more weeks to finish logging all responses and noted that it would produce a report on the methodology for the Committee..

13. Structural reviews: project plan and decision-making

13.1 The Committee noted the paper and agreed to consider it and a revised report structure at its next meeting on 11/12 November 2008.

14. Any other business

14.1 None

29 October 2008