

BCFE (09) 18th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held at 10.30 am on 3 December 2009,
at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P
2HW

Present:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Joan Jones CBE
Professor Colin Mellors
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Jane Earl

In attendance:

Alan Cogbill	Interim CEO LGBCE
Archie Gall	Director
Gareth Nicholson	Media and Public Affairs Officer (Item 2)
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sam Hartley	Review Manager
Alison Wildig	Review Manager
Christopher Eames	Minutes

1. Declarations of interest

Noted: that Max Caller (Chair) owns a holiday cottage in Suffolk but had taken advice that this did not disqualify him from taking part in the Suffolk structural review.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: the following minutes of previous meeting were agreed:

- the minutes of BCFE (09) 17th

3. Matters arising

Noted: that the meeting with the Speakers' Committee on the 25 November was very positive and the Committee now awaited the minutes of that meeting which would formally endorse the LGBCE Corporate Plan and 2010/11 budget.

Resolved: the Committee formally endorsed the amendments, proposed at the last meeting, to the Cheshire East draft recommendations mapping for Crewe and Sandbach.

4. Communications strategy & stakeholder engagement – BCFE (09) 70

Noted:

1. that the paper was a starting point only and designed to set out some key considerations for the Committee to address regarding its future role.
2. that a key issue was whether the Committee should remain an independent partner or should do more to drive or facilitate debate on relevant issues.
3. that the Committee needed to identify and consult those councils that are meeting with success, and therefore be in a position to learn and share lessons.
4. that the Committee should consider further the potential for speaking directly with chief executives and politicians after electoral

reviews had taken place. This would be similar to the Stakeholder Survey but would take it a stage further.

5. that it was important to emphasise the Committee did not have preconceived ideas or outcomes, such as about council size, but that it was about helping councils to achieve the right level of governance and leadership that fits in terms of representation.

Resolved:

1. that the Committee should look into the viability of running a fringe meeting/workshop about preparing for a review, aimed at leaders within councils, at the next LGA Conference in July 2010.
2. that the Committee needed to consider the message the new body wanted to put across from 1 April 2010.

5. Implications of the Court of Appeal Judgment in Forest Heath, Suffolk – BCFE (09) 76

Noted:

1. that the Secretary of State had since provided the Committee with a date of 8 December 2009 for the provision of advice.
2. that there were still two potential legal actions ahead: East Devon and Breckland.
3. following conclusions at its meeting on 7 December there would be a programme of briefings and media interviews would take place.
4. that there was a statutory period of a minimum of 4 weeks from 8 December for representations to be made direct to the Secretary of State on any advice provided by the Committee.

Resolved:

1. that the Committee agreed that its meeting on 7 December it would consider all the representations and other information received since the Committee last considered representations at its meeting on 3 June 2009.
2. that the Committee would also consider all the relevant Suffolk Court of Appeal and Divisional Court documents, together with the Breckland and East Devon pre-action protocol correspondence

3. that at its meeting on 7 December the Committee would also consider whether, in the light of the foregoing, it should modify its views or alter its previously intended advice to the Secretary of State.
4. that, subject to the outcome of that consideration, the Committee should satisfy itself that the draft reports to the Secretary of State accurately reflected its views.

6. Council size policy paper – BCFE (09) 75

Noted:

1. that the paper sets the scene to stimulate discussion on the Committee's approach to council size.
2. that many lessons have been learnt since the Local Government Act 2000 and some elected mayors are proposing, after a period of operation, that the size of their councils be reduced.
3. that the current policy has too much of a 'light touch' approach, relying too heavily on councils to provide information on proposed council size.
4. that the subject of district mergers is now appearing on the agenda and that there is a risk in conducting such reviews too speedily in order to bring about savings.
5. that the review process will be looked at by the LGBCE, and that certain types of review might require 2 stages of consultation, while others might start with the publication of draft recommendations, following which there would be two rounds of consultation.

7. Any other business

Noted: that the next meeting will take place at 9.30am on Monday 7 December 2009.

December 2009