

BCFE (10) 4th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 18 March 2010, in the
Boothroyd Room in 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

Also present:

Alan Cogbill	Interim Chief Executive LGBCE
Archie Gall	Director
Sam Hartley	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business and Committee Services Manager
Jessica Metheringham	Review Officer
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
Gareth Nicholson	Press and Public Affairs Officer
Eleanor Gregory	Minutes

1. Introduction

1. the LGBCE's Business and Committee Services Manager, Sarah Vallotton, was introduced and welcomed by the Committee.

2. Minutes from Committee Meeting on 18 February 2010

1. the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters arising

1. the Director gave an update on the structural review debate that was due to take place in the House of Lords the following Monday

4. Declarations of Interest

1. Joan Jones declared an interest in the review of Stoke-on-Trent and took no part in the discussion on that item

5. Operational Report

Noted:

1. the Director informed the Committee of the progress of the electoral reviews for Northumberland, County Durham, Cornwall, Stoke-on-Trent, Mansfield, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, Northampton, Sedgemoor, South Derbyshire and West Somerset, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester
2. the timetable for Cheshire East had been adjusted and the review will now finish at the same time as Cheshire West and Chester

6. Risk Register

Noted:

1. the updated risks

7. Overview Report

Noted:

1. the Review manager presented the electoral reviews overview report
2. the Committee commended the team for providing good electoral equality in Cheshire West and Chester
3. the Chair requested comparative councillor:elector ratio data in all future overview reports, which would compare different classes of authority. This would not be to set standard ratios but to reflect on the ranges within which different Councils with different political leadership arrangements had been concluded.

8. Cheshire West & Chester- final recommendations

Noted:

1. there had been 203 submissions received in response to the draft recommendations
2. the review team felt the draft recommendations worked well and where possible they had sought to accommodate suggested changes
3. the review team proposed a minor boundary change in the City of Chester to strengthen the boundary between the proposed Newton and Garden Quarter wards. They also suggested revised recommendations for two areas: Helsby & Frodsham and Eddisbury
4. three areas had been identified where there might be a need for some further limited consultation: Ellesmere Port, Neston & Elton and Dutton
5. that further consultation would not affect the timetable. The suggested period for further consultation was from 24 March-21 April 2010
6. the Committee discussed going out to further consultation for Ellesmere Port
7. the Chair asked the team for assurances on the accuracy of the electoral figures. Both the Review Officer and Director confirmed that the team had confidence in the figures
8. Joan Jones noted the importance of making clear to respondents in the areas involved that the Committee had taken on board their suggestions but, given the need to provide for electoral equality, could not always facilitate their proposed changes
9. the Press and Public Affairs Officer said that the Committee should provide a clear media message in relation to the Burton area to ensure the public was made aware of why decisions had been made and the impossibility of a split for Burton and Little Neston
10. the Committee discussed the boundaries of Weaverham and Dutton

Agreed:

11. to confirm draft recommendations for Ellesmere Port with minor changes to Strawberry with no further consultation in the area
12. to a limited further consultation on the draft recommendations in the Saughall & Mollington area and an alternative proposal
13. to no further consultation for Weaverham and Dutton and to approve the proposed recommendations
14. to agree the remainder of the draft recommendations as final.

9. Bedford - draft recommendations

Noted:

1. during Stage One 21 submissions had been received with one borough-wide scheme advocating a pattern of single- and two-member wards
2. Bedford and Kempston Conservative Association's submission proposed a pattern of single member wards
3. the Bedford Council scheme had not taken into account the areas of overspill outside of Bedford Town, particularly to the north of the town. The team had sought to bring into the town area one of these overspill areas whose sole access was from the urban area
4. in Kempston the team proposed that the Committee adopt the Council's warding arrangement with one amendment; proposing that the ward boundaries follow the existing parish boundaries
5. the team had based their proposals on the Council's submission for the rural area subject to a two-member Great Barford ward to accommodate the proposals to the immediate north of Bedford town.
6. the Chair asked the team for assurances on the accuracy of the electoral figures. The Review Manager confirmed that the team had confidence in the figures

Agreed:

7. To adopt the proposed draft recommendations

10. Central Bedfordshire - draft recommendations

Noted:

1. during Stage One the team had received 44 submissions
2. the team proposed to adopt the Council scheme with minor modifications. This would maintain electoral equality and minimise the splitting of parishes between wards
3. the Council had proposed that Sandy be warded with Blunham in a three member ward
4. the team proposed adopting the Council's proposal for Flitwick town for two two-member wards
5. the team also recommended adopting the Council's proposals for Toddington, Ampthill, Leighton-Lislade and Houghton Regis. It was recommended that the Committee base its draft recommendations on the Council's proposals for Dunstable Town subject to one amendment in the Northfields area
6. the Chair asked the team for assurances on the accuracy of the electoral figures. The Review Officer confirmed that the team had confidence in the figures

Agreed

7. to adopt the proposed draft recommendations

11. Mansfield and Stoke-on-Trent draft recommendations - amendments

Noted:

1. that the Committee had agreed in correspondence the amendments to the Mansfield and Stoke-on-Trent draft recommendations, and the ward names for Stoke-on-Trent

Agreed:

1. the amendment for Mansfield
2. the amendment for Stoke-on-Trent
3. the ward names for Stoke-on-Trent
4. all changes were as documented in the papers circulated to the Committee.

12. Stoke-on-Trent consultation activities

Noted:

1. the Press and Public Affairs Officer presented a paper on local consultation activities in Stoke during Stage Three of the review
2. the Committee discussed the recommendations and were not persuaded by the proposals for public meetings.
3. the Chair asked the Director to investigate further the possibility of supervised drop-in sessions
4. the Review Manager commented on the time scale and staff resources
5. the Director noted that local consultations in Stoke-on-Trent would take place after the local election.

Agreed

6. that the comments made would be reflected in the adopted approach for consultation on this review.

13. Background information on administrative boundary reviews

Noted:

1. the Director presented a report on administrative boundary reviews, for the Committee's information
2. the Director referred to a number of issues the LGBCE would need to consider in undertaking such reviews
3. the paper would be discussed at a future LGBCE meeting

Break

Meeting reconvened

Committee Board -1st informal meeting of the Shadow Board of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

1. Transition to LGBCE - Founding documents

Noted:

1. the Interim Chief Executive presented a paper on the transition to the LGBCE
2. the Interim Chief Executive had produced a set of founding documents
3. the Board discussed the LGBCE's budget
4. the LGBCE would consider recommending to the Speaker's Committee that Commission members moved to a fixed annual level of remuneration instead of daily fees once it was possible to establish a rational position.
5. the Board discussed the Statement of Terms of Office for the Chair and Commissioners
6. the Board discussed the technicalities relating to the first formal meeting of the LGBCE

Agreed:

1. the Board in principle approved the outline budget
2. the interim Chief Executive to produce a quarterly report on the budget
3. to formally appoint the Audit Committee at the first meeting
4. to formally agree, as the new Board, the documentation received

2. Electoral Commission Annual Report 2009-10

Noted:

1. the Committee had been asked to contribute a valedictory section to the Boundaries chapter of the Electoral Commission's Annual Report
2. the Director sought the Committee's views on the main points for the Annual Report
3. the Committee Members gave their views on the report

3. AOBs

1. the Press and Public Affairs Officer noted that he had procured a media monitoring company – Precise – to provide the LGBCE with press cuttings
2. the Chair and the Director had met Hilary Armstrong to discuss the Durham review
3. the Chair and the Interim Chief Executive had met Gary Streeter MP to discuss arrangements for accountability.
4. the Chair updated the Board on the progress of the Order-making process

Agreed:

1. the first meeting of the LGBCE to start at 9:30 on 15 April 2010