

Please note that some information in these minutes has been redacted for one of the following reasons:

1) Because it relates to the Committee's decision-making process of part of a current review. This information will be released when the relevant review is completed.

2) It constitutes legal advice to the Boundary Committee which is privileged and therefore is not disclosed.

BCFE (08) 12th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 25 September 2008
at 10.30am at Social Market Foundation, 11 Tufton Street,
London, SW1P 3QB.

Present:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Professor Ron Johnston

Apologies:

Jane Earl
Professor Colin Mellors

Also present:

Archie Gall	Director
Gareth Nicholson	Media Relations Officer
Bob Posner	Legal Counsel
Elizabeth Morrow	Lawyer

Sam Hartley	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
William Morrison	Review Officer
Kalim Anwer	Review Officer
Tim Bowden	Review Officer
Jessica Metherringham	Review Officer
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
James Ansell	Review Officer
Megan Bayford	Review Assistant

1. Minutes of the last meeting: 14 August 2008 BCFE (08) 11th Meeting

- 1.1 Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.
- 1.2 The Chair wished for clarification of Item 3.6, which stated that a council size in Cornwall of 123 would be the second-largest after Birmingham. Birmingham City Council actually has 120 members. A council size of 123 would, therefore, be the largest in the country.

2. Matters arising

- 2.1 There were no matters arising not to be covered in the agenda.

3. Draft recommendations for Shropshire – BCFE (08) 28

- 3.1 The Review Officer (Shropshire) presented a paper on the draft recommendations for Shropshire.

Council size

- 3.2 In the draft recommendations a proposal for a council size of 75 was submitted to the Committee by Shropshire County Council. The Review Officer noted that the evidence provided to support the proposal actually pointed to a council size of 74. The Committee had therefore adopted a council size of 74.

Boundary arrangements

- 3.3 The Chair then suggested the Committee discuss point-by-point certain geographical areas which were seen to be particularly contentious.
- 3.4 The Review Officer advised that the draft recommendations in the areas of Bridgnorth town were generally well received with the exception of the proposed three-member Albrighton, Shifnal & Sheriffhales division. In discussion the following points were made:
 - Albrighton and Shifnal are surrounded by the county boundary, making their division particularly problematic.
 - Albrighton is a distinct community and the Committee could reasonably justify a single-member division here, though it would produce an electoral variance of +14%.
 - Sheriffhales cannot stand alone as a division, given the electoral variance that would result and it is extremely rural and looks strongly towards Shifnal. However, a division including all of Shifnal and Sheriffhales would also produce too large an electoral variance. Further consultation was needed on this division and the possibility of either three single member divisions or a two-member and single member division.

- 3.5 The Committee agreed to seek further limited clarification on the arguments used for dividing the Albrighton, Shifnal & Sheriffhales division.
- 3.6 The Committee then discussed the area of Broseley. The point was raised that Broseley has little in common with Much Wenlock, which the draft recommendations had paired together to form a two member division. A new boundary between Much Wenlock and Broseley to create two single member wards was proposed and, after some discussion, it was decided that the Committee seek further limited clarification on electoral arrangements in this area and the proposal for two single-member divisions.
- 3.7 The Review Officer raised issues surrounding Church Stretton and Craven Arms. The Committee discussed the different communities, and the Chair raised the point that the Committee needs to be consistent between its recommendations for single member divisions in some parts of the county and its willingness to form two or three member divisions in other areas. The Director identified the need for the Committee to have strong justification for granting high electoral variances and questioned whether a mere lack of commonality between two areas is sufficient reason. The Review Officer stated that if Church Stretton and Craven Arms were divided into two single member wards, the electoral variance would be +17% and +5% respectively, and as a two-member ward, +12%. The point was also made that the two communities were united geographically by the A49 corridor. The Committee agreed that the draft proposals for the Church Stretton and Craven Arms area be confirmed as final.
- 3.8 The Committee concurred that there are no strong justifications for modifications to the draft proposals of the areas around Wheathill, despite some representations to the Committee.
- 3.9 The Review Officer reported that a large number of representations had been made concerning the proposed three-member Bayston Hill, Column & Sutton division. The Committee received strong evidence of Bayston Hill having a distinct identity from Shrewsbury and closer links with nearby Condover. However, the Review Officer advised that a division of Bayston Hill wholly paired with Condover would produce an electoral variance of +28%, which the Committee felt was unacceptable. The Committee agreed to seek limited further clarification on the option of a two-member division comprising the proposed Burnell division and Bayston Hill parish.

4. Draft recommendations for Wiltshire – BCFE (08) 29

- 4.1 The Review Officer (Wiltshire) presented a report on the draft recommendations for Wiltshire. He advised that a 98 member council of single member divisions was broadly supported at draft stage. It was also reported that there had been some objections to Wiltshire County

Council's projected growth figures for 2012. The Committee was advised that the electorate projections provided by Wiltshire County Council continue to serve as the most reasonable basis for the development of electoral arrangements for the new authority.

Clarifications by Wiltshire County Council

- 4.2 The Committee then discussed the clarifications made by Wiltshire County Council to its electorate projections and mapping following its initial submission to the Committee. The Review Officer explained that following these clarifications, all relevant stakeholders were immediately contacted to ensure they were up to date with the County Council's modifications. The Committee noted that at no point has its draft recommendations been amended. The Chair then questioned why the Committee was not informed at an earlier date about these errors. The Director apologised for the delay in informing the Committee but reassured the Committee that all persons concerned were informed of the changes as soon as possible and no representations were made to the Committee in between the publication of the draft recommendations and the amendments made by Wiltshire County Council.
- 4.3 Legal Counsel stated that the Committee should ensure that they were satisfied that the correct steps were taken within the framework of the legislation and that there was no harm or prejudice done to the consultation process.
- 4.4 The Chair raised the desire to have an additional period of time to draw further attention to the changes in some areas. The Committee agreed to this.

Boundary arrangements

- 4.5 The Review Officer then identified the County Council's amendments around the town of Chippenham. The Committee's draft recommendations had adopted the County Council's original proposals, which were subsequently amended in line with Chippenham Town Council's scheme. Considering that the original electoral figures were also subsequently amended by the Council, the Committee agreed to seek further views on the modifications given by Wiltshire County Council.
- 4.6 The Committee then discussed the area of Wootton Bassett. The Review Officer identified a proposal by Councillor Groom during Stage Three. The Committee agreed that since the proposal is a significant modification to the Committee's draft recommendations, it would seek limited further views on this issue.
- 4.7 The Committee agreed to incorporate the amendment by Wiltshire County Council to the mapping of the proposed division of Westbury Laverton division.

- 4.8 After representations by Erlestoke residents and parish council, the Committee agreed to adopt modifications to its draft recommendations to place Erlestoke parish within a 'The Lavingtons & Erlestoke' division.
- 4.9 The Committee agreed to adopt modified mapping of the boundary between Amesbury East and Amesbury West after some inaccuracy in the description of this boundary by Amesbury Town Council. The Committee identified the need for further clarification in this area.
- 4.10 The Chair confirmed that the Committee accepted their draft recommendations for the Tisbury area.
- 4.11 The Committee discussed the possible transfer of Maiden Bradley with Yarnfield parish council to the Mere area, which would create a -15% electoral variance in the Warminster Without division. The subsequent discussion centred on the need for justification of large electoral variances to be exceptionally strong in order to persuade the Committee to agree amendments to its draft recommendations. The Committee agreed that given the high electoral variance under the stage three proposal that the draft recommendations be confirmed as final.
- 4.12 The Review Officer reported that the Committee had received a large volume of representations about the area of Harnham in Salisbury. Of the original proposals given by local political parties, it was felt that none adequately met the needs of local residents. The Committee felt that little community evidence was offered to support modifications to its draft recommendations. The Committee agreed to accept the draft recommendations for this area unchanged.

Name changes

- 4.13 The Committee agreed to make the following name changes to its draft recommendations:
- Westbury Whitehorse into Ethandune
 - Sutton Benger to Kington
 - Melksham Rural into Melksham Without North
 - Ashton Keynes & Minety into Minety
 - East Knoyle & Nadder Valley into Nadder & Easy Knoyle
 - Corsham Pickwick into Corsham Pickwick & Rudloe
 - The Collingbournes & Everleigh into The Collingbournes
 - Wesybury Vale into Westbury West
 - Westbury Laverton into Westbury East
 - Westbury Ham into Westbury North.

5. Draft recommendations for West Sussex – BCFE (08) 30

- 5.1 The Review Officer (West Sussex) presented a report on the draft recommendations for West Sussex.

Boundary arrangements

- 5.2 The Review Officer reported that Littlehampton Town Council had submitted a proposal during Stage Three which transfers 384 electors to Littlehampton Town Electoral Division (ED) and 241 to Arundel and Wick ED. The Committee agreed that further limited consultation on this matter was needed given that this proposal had not been previously commented on as part of the formal consultation process. .
- 5.3 The Committee agreed to no changes to its draft recommendations regarding the Bognor Regis and Bersted areas.
- 5.4 The Committee confirmed their draft recommendations in Chichester district.
- 5.5 The Review Officer reported that a visit to Gossops Green, Bewbush and Ilfield revealed that the draft recommendations would split a long-standing community. The Committee agreed to change their draft recommendations to correspond to the proposal originally put forward by the County Council at Stage One and additional minor boundary amendments to tidy the boundary between Northgate and Three Bridges ED and Southgate and Crawley Central ED.
- 5.6 The Review Officer identified a strong need for further consultation on the possibility of the moving Ashington parish from the proposed Billingshurst ED following strong representations by both communities.
- 5.7 The Chair identified the high electoral variance that would result without a consequential amendment to the proposed Billingshurst ED. The Committee agreed to seek limited further clarification on the following two options:
- The draft recommendations as they stand.
 - A division pattern which retained Ashington in Storrington ED and transfer Itchingfield from Warnham & Rusper ED to Billingshurst ED.
- 5.8 The Committee agreed to finalise its draft recommendations for the Mid Sussex area.

Name changes

- 5.9 The Committee agreed to the following name changes:
- Sompting and North Lancing ED
 - Durrington ED to Durrington and Salvington ED
 - Offington ED to Cissbury ED

Further consultation

- 5.10 The Review Manager (Devon) wished for the Chair to clarify the difference between 'seeking further views' and 'limited further

consultation' and queried whether the Committee were content that it was appropriate that only limited consultation was conducted on very specific issues.

- 5.11 Legal Counsel confirmed that there was a precedent for this type of 'consultation'.

6. Cornwall electoral review oral update

- 6.1 The Review Manager (Cornwall) reported that given the current anticipated timescale of the Cornwall electoral review, it would be impossible to have new arrangements in place in time for local elections in May or June. He advised the Committee that draft recommendations will be available at the 29 October meeting, to be published on 2 December. The consultation (Stage Three) period will then last 12 weeks, with the Review Team producing reports for the Committee in approximately early April 2009. The Committee anticipate being able to finalise its recommendations for the Electoral Commission over the summer of 2009, with the possibility that elections in Cornwall may be conducted in October or November 2009, should the Secretary of State consider moving the ordinary date of elections.
- 6.2 The Committee then discussed the timetable, especially points surrounding when the Electoral Commission may be able to fully consider approval and implementation. The Committee stressed the point that the elector was the most important in considering timescale and it would not be beneficial to Cornwall residents to wait an inordinately long time for elections. The Chair agreed to advise the Electoral Commission as the tight timetable for Cornwall and recommend a further meeting of the Electoral Commission in August 2009.
- 6.3 The Committee also agreed that the timetable needs to be finalised quickly in order to combat negative press attention. The Media Relations Officer reported to the Committee that the coverage is negative, but issuing some letters or editorials could combat this. The Committee agreed not to take any press action until after the draft recommendations are published.

7. Boundary Committee work programme – BCFE (08) 31

- 7.1 The Review Manager (Electoral) presented a report on the Committee's anticipated work programme for the next few years and assured the Committee that it would receive updates on progress as the programme was developed.
- 7.2 The Director clarified that the work programme is based on the assumption that the Committee will be in a position to conduct electoral reviews of Norfolk, Suffolk and Devon in 2009, but there is a very tight timescale between implementation of the structural reviews and finishing an electoral review before October 2009. The Committee agreed to

express its doubts about the possible timescales to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as soon as possible.

- 7.3 The Committee was of the view that lead Deputy Commissioners should be assigned to those reviews most likely to go forward.

8. Structural reviews oral update

Judicial reviews

8.1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Devon

- 8.4 The Review Officer (Devon) gave an oral report on the status of the consultation, highlighting the meetings held with key stakeholders in Devon and the high volume of submissions the Committee has received to date.

- 8.5 The Chair expressed a desire to be informed about the regional breakdown of the submissions and ensure that accuracy is verified.

Norfolk

- 8.6 The Review Officer (Norfolk) gave an oral report about various meetings and roundtables with stakeholders and authorities.

- 8.7 The Director reminded the Committee that submissions given after 26 September will be considered by the Committee up until it makes its decision regarding final recommendations.

Suffolk

- 8.8 The Review Officer (Suffolk) gave an oral report on the consultation process in Suffolk.

Durham/Northumberland

8.9 The Review Manager (Electoral) gave an oral report on the status of the Durham and Northumberland electoral reviews. The Committee was advised that the Director and Professor Mellors had visited both authorities to discuss the issue of council size and that the consultation period had now ended. Both authorities had made submissions and, given their content, it was possible that a period of further consultation would be necessary in one or both areas. The Committee would make its formal recommendation at its meeting on 6 / 7 October 2008.

9. Structural review project plan – BCFE (08) 32

9.1 The Committee discussed some additions to the project plan and additional dates on the schedule. One error in the report was corrected: the financial consultants who will be briefing the Committee are from CIPFA, rather than IPF as stated.

10. Structural review report skeleton – BCFE (08) 33

10.1 The Chair requested that the report skeleton contain additional subsections and be given further consideration. The Chair stressed the importance of these reports to the Secretary of State for Communities and the need for the structure to be absolutely correct.

10.2 The Committee discussed the need to keep the possibility open on separate reports for Norfolk and Suffolk. The Chair agreed and scheduled this discussion for the next meeting.

11. Structural review risk register – BCFE (08) 34

11.1 The Committee accepted the structural review risk register and thanked the Review Team for its efforts.

12. Electoral review risk register – BCFE (08) 35

12.1 The Committee accepted the electoral review risk register and again thanked the Review Team.

13. Stakeholder survey report 2007/08 – BCFE (08) 36

13.1 The Director presented the stakeholder survey report 2007/08 to the Committee. The Director cited an overall satisfaction reported by stakeholders. The Committee did raise an issue with an overall heavy reliance on the internet with possible detriment of effecting communication with local authorities and parishes.

14. Any other business

Appraisals

14.1 The Committee discussed postponing appraisals until after the New Year to allow for newer Committee members to have held their posts for a full year. The Chair agreed to fix dates for the appraisals in the future and discuss the details at a later point.

Email communication

14.2 The Chair said that when commenting on future reports prepared by the team, electronic versions may not be the best form of media to add annotations. All Committee members and staff should assume that their e-mails will be in the public domain.

Delivery of submissions materials

14.3 The Committee stressed the need for expedited delivery of submissions from the reviews. One Committee Member reported problems with the courier in receiving some documents and it was agreed that all submissions would be sent by Next Day Delivery whenever possible.

Photographer

14.4 The Media Relations Officer advised the Committee that at the next meeting there would be a photographer present with the view of updating Corporate Communication's image library.

October 2008