

BCFE (09) 11th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 22 June 2009, in the Boothroyd Room in Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HW

Present:

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

Also present:

Archie Gall	Director
Alison Wildig	Review Manager
Sam Hartley	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
Megan Bayford	Review Assistant

1. Minutes from Committee meeting on 26 May 2009

1.1 The minutes were agreed.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Committee revisited the conclusions it had reached at its meeting on 15 June on its advice to the Secretary of State in relation to the structural review of Suffolk, in particular the two unitary pattern.

2.2 Following further consideration on the extent to which that pattern could be said to be capable of attracting a measure of support from key partners, stakeholders and service users/citizens if it were implemented, the Committee concluded that, unlike the two-unitary patterns in Devon and Norfolk, and given the appetite for structural change in the county, it was very likely that key partners and stakeholders in particular would lend their support for the pattern if it were implemented. This was a key difference that the Committee should not ignore. Accordingly, the Committee confirmed that it would make this alternative proposal to the Secretary of State, in addition to a county unitary pattern for Suffolk.

2.3 Having identified two alternative proposals for Suffolk that it wished to make to the Secretary of State, the Committee noted that its clear preference for the unitary county, which it considered would be more effective in delivering the outcomes specified by each of the five criteria. The Committee noted that as part of its advice it would highlight the reasons for this view.

2.4 The Committee requested an update on the Cornwall electoral review. The Review Manager gave a brief update on the current status of the review.

3. Draft reports – Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk structural reviews

3.1 The Committee decided to defer consideration of the draft reports to a workshop session between individual Committee members and Review Officers following the Committee meeting.

4. Northumberland electoral review – draft recommendations – BCFE (09) 37

4.1 The Review Officer presented a report on the Northumberland electoral review draft recommendations. Four maps were tabled for minor modifications to the paper (these modifications did not affect electors and were proposed by Ordnance Survey to ensure more clearly defined

boundaries that were tied to ground detail). These minor boundary modifications were agreed by the Committee.

- 4.2 The Committee discussed the Alnwick area, where the Council proposed two single-member divisions. It was considered that the split of the town into two divisions would not provide for effective and convenient local government and would be somewhat arbitrary. After some discussion, the Committee agreed to propose a two-member division for this area.
- 4.3 The Committee discussed moving away from the Council's proposals and transferring the parish of Hollinghill into the Rothbury division. The Committee noted that representations from the parish had provided strong evidence of community identities and interests in support of such a change. In light of the evidence received, the Committee agreed to the parish's inclusion in the Rothbury division.
- 4.4 The Committee discussed the Ponteland area. The Review Officer outlined the Council's proposal of maintaining the four-way split of the town as had been the case for County Council elections. The Review Team proposed instead two two-member divisions in order to avoid too arbitrary a split of the urban area of the parish. The Committee, in discussion, was not persuaded that this proposal would provide a better reflection of community identities. The Committee also noted that no one had yet made representations opposing the four-way split of the parish and considered that a modification would do little to improve on electoral equality. The Committee confirmed it were minded, at this stage, to accept the Council's proposal to maintain the current pattern of four single member divisions for Ponteland. However, it asked that the draft recommendations report specifically highlight the issue.
- 4.5 All other proposals in the report were agreed by the Committee.
- 4.6 The Committee discussed the general electoral review process and the involvement of lead Committee members in their respective review areas. It was agreed that Committee members and staff should plan in advance to visit review areas prior to Committee consideration of draft and final recommendations. This would assist the Committee in reaching conclusions on any contentious issues raised by respondents.

5. A.O.B.

- 5.1 There were no other items not on the agenda.

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