

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Thursday, 21st June, 2012 at 6.0 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors R.J. Sloan (Chairman), K.T. Blundell, S. Davies, N.J. Dugmore , A.J. Eade, A.D. McClements and R.A. Overton.

BRC-1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

BRC-2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

BRC-3 BOROUGH ELECTORAL REVIEW

Members received the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection which provided briefing information of the Further Electoral Review of the Borough. This was one of a series of three briefings that had been scheduled for Members to consider:

- Overview of the Review and introduction to the question of Council size
- The question of Community Identity – linked to electorate forecasting across the Borough
- Consideration of ‘effective and convenient local government’ - the question of ‘how many councillors does it take?’

The final briefing in August would lead to the Committee’s recommendation to Full Council on 13th September on the appropriate Council size.

The Electoral Services Team Leader provided Members with copies of slides which dealt with the various elements of the review and invited questions from members at the end of his presentation.

Review

A review was due to be conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).The review operated to statutory criteria and would consider the electoral arrangements of the Borough.

- Council size
- Electoral equality (number of electors to councillors)
- Number and boundaries of wards
- Number of councillors to be elected for each ward
- Ward names

The review had been triggered by a number of factors. The last review had been completed in 2002 and had resulted in the current arrangements whereby the Borough had 33 wards which were represented by a total of 54 councillors. The current electoral quota was 2,292 electors per councillor.

Development within the Borough meant that 36% of the Borough wards were now either 10% above or below the electoral quota, no ward was currently more than 30% above or below the electoral quota.

The review process would begin with initial information gathering, produce a recommendation on Council size and then prepare and publish draft recommendations. These recommendations would be publicised and subject to consultation. Following this a final report would be produced and an order made for new arrangements to be in place for May 2015 local elections. Councillor A.D. McClements noted that any proposals on Council size should be properly supported with evidence showing how that size of Council would properly support the business of the Council

LGBCE guidance on Council size indicated that they would expect views to be argued along the lines of 'effective and convenient local government: how many councillors would it take for the councillors and the Council to conduct statutory roles and the Council's business most effectively.

Councillor A.D. McClements noted that any

Statutory Criteria

LGBCE were required to work to a number of statutory criteria:

- Electoral Fairness
- Community Identity
- Effective and Convenient Local Government
- Future Development

Parishes

LGBCE had no powers to alter Parish boundaries. In drawing up Borough wards, Parishes and Parish wards should not be split. However, there were powers to make consequential changes to Parish electoral arrangements.

- Parish council size
- Division of Parishes into Parish wards
- The number and boundaries of Parish wards
- The number of councillors per ward
- Names of Parish wards

Members raised a number of questions. In order to provide evidence on the question of Council size a councillor workload survey was currently being prepared for circulation to Members. This would look at the split of time spent performing different aspects of the councillor's role. A number of Members noted that there were a number of significant issues and additional responsibilities that would have an impact on councillor workloads in the future. These included:

- Public Health workload
- Community engagement role, particularly in relation to social deprivation
- Welfare Reform agenda

The Chairman, with the agreement of the meeting, proposed that officers provide information on 2 models of Council size to the next meeting of the Committee in July. This would enable Members to look at the feasibility of each model, taking in to account councillor/elector ratios and communities of identity and to discuss evidence supporting these options that would lead towards recommending a suitable Council size for the Borough.

The models for consideration would be for

- a) Council size of 50
- b) Council size of 40

Next meeting 6pm 19 July Committee Room 2

The meeting ended at 6.54 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: