

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Thursday, 23rd August, 2012 at 6.00 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-5 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman

BRC-6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

BRC-7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

BRC-8 BOROUGH ELECTORAL REVIEW – OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL SIZE

Members received the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection which provided briefing information of the Further Electoral Review of the Borough. The report concluded the Committee's work in considering what Council size should be recommended to Full Council. The report covered information previously requested by the Committee on

- Committee workloads
- Results of a councillor workload survey
- Consideration of additional challenges and developments facing the role of the elected councillor.

Referring to the results of the councillor workload survey, Councillor R.A. Overton noted that a large number of members had reported that workloads had noticeably increased. The additional challenges and developments outlined in the report would make the role of councillors more demanding in the future. Cuts to budgets tended to increase councillors' casework, particularly in the more deprived wards of the Borough. The ethos of a Co-operative Council placed an onus on councillors to actively engage with their community, this added significantly to the workload of elected members.

Councillor A.D. McClements told members that the workload survey provided data on formal meetings but that she knew that there were many more informal meetings undertaken by councillors, particularly with Scrutiny work. Councillor K.T. Blundell agreed that case work had increased, noting that an effective councillor engaging

with their community would tend to create sustained workloads at a high level. Councillor Blundell also felt that reducing the number of councillors and increasing workloads significantly had the potential to exclude a wide range of people that might otherwise come forward to serve as councillors. Councillor S. Davies noted that reductions had been made on the cost of councillors through voluntary reductions, expenses were now at a minimum and it was not sensible to make large reductions in the numbers of councillors on the basis of cost reductions. The Council needed an appropriate number of councillors in order to deliver the Council's responsibilities efficiently. Councillor N.A. Dugmore told the meeting that the previous review resulting in 54 councillors had been conducted 10 years previously and the current review would be effective for a further 10 years. Circumstances changed and it would not be appropriate to continue with a model that would effectively be 20 years old. He felt that where councillor workloads were high, neighbouring councillors could support and assist each other and that better ways of working could ensure that councillors were better utilised.

Councillor R.J. Sloan (Chairman) believed that work was being passed down from central to local government and that workloads would continue to increase. The issue was not solely around savings but in ensuring that elected councillors were able to properly serve the people who had elected them. Councillor A.J. Eade felt that there could be different ways to deliver a reduction in councillor numbers and that this could be done with a different Committee and governance structure.

Following further discussion a proposal that the Council size should be 54 was proposed and seconded. Following a vote this proposal was carried by 5 votes to 2 with no abstentions and it was:

RESOLVED – That the Committee recommend to Full Council that the appropriate Council size should be 54 councillors and that the Boundary Review Committee make a formal submission on behalf of the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

The meeting ended at 6.41 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: