

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Monday 3rd February 2014 at 6.00 pm in Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors R Sloan (Chair), K Blundell, S Davies, A Eade, I Fletcher and A McClements

IN ATTENDANCE: J. Eatough (Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services), P Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and P Smith (Democratic Services Team Leader).

A number of residents from Lilleshall were also in attendance.

BRC-13 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

BRC-14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor R Overton

BRC-15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

BRC-16 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND – ELECTORAL REVIEW OF TELFORD & WREKIN BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services which outlined the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) following their review of the electoral arrangements in the Borough.

Following consideration of the comments received on its draft proposals, the LGBCE had now published its final recommendations, a copy of which was appended to the report. As a result of some of the consultation submissions, the LGBCE had modified some of its draft proposals. The most significant of these were:

- Parishes of Eyton-upon-the-Weald Moors and Preston-upon-the-Weald Moors to be included in the Edmond & Ercall Magna ward;
- Single member wards for Admaston & Bratton, Shawbirch and Wrockwardine wards;
- Transfer of around 120 electors from Dohill ward to Shawbirch ward;
- Minor change to the boundary between Haygate and Park wards;
- Minor change to the boundary between St Georges and Priorslee wards;
- Proposed three member Madeley ward now to be called Madeley & Sutton Hill ward.

The final recommendations resulted in 12 single member wards, 12 two-member wards and 6 three member wards. No ward was forecast to have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2018. There would be some consequential changes to parish warding arrangements.

An Order – the legal document which brought into force the recommendations – would be laid in Parliament, and implemented subject to parliamentary scrutiny. The new electoral arrangements would come into force at the next Borough elections in May 2015.

Members expressed dissatisfaction at the outcome of the review in some areas (eg: Lawley, the rural wards between Telford and Newport) where the strong views of local communities and elected representatives had not been taken on board by the Commission. It was suggested that continuity had not been helped by the changes in LGBCE staff during the Review.

RESOLVED – that the final LGBCE recommendations, which will come into force at the next Council elections in May 2015, be noted.

BRC-17 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – LILLESHALL, DONNINGTON & MUXTON PARISH: DRAFT PROPOSALS

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services, appended to which was the suggested Draft Proposals in response to the petition for a Community Governance Review (CGR). The CGR had been triggered following the submission of a valid petition calling for a separate parish to be formed for the Lilleshall ward of Lilleshall, Donnington & Muxton Parish Council.

The Chair reported that he had attended a meeting of Lilleshall, Donnington & Muxton Parish Council to explain the CGR process and the role of this Committee. He added that he would allow the lead petitioner – Mr P Hawkins – and the Chair of the Lilleshall, Donnington & Muxton Parish Council – Mr A Baker – to speak for up to five minutes each. This was to allow the Committee an opportunity to hear views from the local community about the process so far and any representations relevant to the draft proposals.

Mr Baker stated that he wished to see an arrangement that would suit all parties. Local residents welcomed the proposed ballot along the lines suggested in the Draft Proposals document, and it was hoped that the outcome would be accepted by all as the true position of residents on this matter. There was concern at the cost and time already spent on this issue, and that it needed to be resolved.

Mr Hawkins referred to the recommendation in the Draft Proposals document for a postal ballot of all registered voters in Lilleshall, which he opposed. However, if the Committee decided to hold a ballot, he suggested that no further information or documentation from either side be included. It would be up to each side to campaign within the village, and circulate their own information.

The Democratic Services Manager then presented the Draft Proposals document. Since the publication of the Terms of Reference for the Review, 54 electors had made individual or joint submissions by letter or e-mail. The submissions indicated

that there were strong views both in favour of a separate parish and in favour of maintaining current arrangements. Copies of all the submissions received were appended to the document. The views and comments received had been considered alongside the policies laid down in the Terms of Reference, and weighed against the Council's legal duty to ensure that community governance within the Borough reflected the identities and interests of the community; was effective and convenient; and took into account any other arrangements for community representation and engagement in the area. The Draft Proposals suggested that there was evidence that Lilleshall was a distinctive community of identity and that from a budgetary perspective it should be viable. However, from the submissions received, there was an absence of community consensus. The Council did not wish to impose a change in community governance arrangements that were not in line with the wishes or interests of the Lilleshall community. Therefore, as set out in the Terms of Reference, it was proposed to undertake direct consultation with residents in order to get the views of the broader Lilleshall community. Following consultation with the Chair, a postal ballot was being organised to take place between 21 February and 7 March to gauge local opinion on the formation of a separate Lilleshall parish council. A copy of the proposed ballot paper was appended to the report, along with a document containing information from both sides that could be included with the ballot paper.

Following publication of the Draft Proposals, there would be a further three month consultation period prior to the preparation of final recommendations.

The Committee noted the proposed arrangements for the postal ballot of Lilleshall electors, and there was discussion of some of the detailed arrangements. In terms of the ballot paper itself, a view was expressed from a Lilleshall resident that the proposed wording of the question would give the "yes" campaign an advantage. However, Members considered that the question needed to be expressed as simply as possible, and that the wording as proposed was perfectly acceptable. It was also suggested that it needed to be made clear in the information provided with the ballot paper that the result of the ballot was not binding on the Council. In terms of providing information about the draft proposals ahead of the ballot, it was suggested that as well as the Council website, copies of the documents should be placed in Donnington and Newport libraries and in the mobile library. The Democratic Services Manager added that a ballot box could be located in Addenbrooke House Reception to allow residents to return their ballot paper if they had missed the last opportunity to post it back to the Council. There was also a discussion about whether information from each side should be included with the ballot papers, and on balance it was concluded that the ballot should not contain literature to avoid any allegations of bias or unfairness.

Members requested that they be given more time to look at the detail of the Draft Proposals document, and that any comments be submitted before the publication date of 7 February 2014.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services, in consultation with the Chair, to adopt and publish the**

Draft Proposals, subject to receipt of any further comments from members of the Committee by 7 February 2014;

- (b) that it be noted that an all-postal ballot will take place later in February in order to gain the views of the wider Lilleshall electorate on formation of a separate Lilleshall parish council, and that the ballot paper design and question be approved;**
- (b) that no information presenting the case for change and the case for no change be included with the postal ballot paper**

The meeting ended at 6.36 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: