

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Monday, 30 November 2015 at 6pm in Meeting Rooms G3/4, Addenbrooke House, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors R J Sloan (Chairman), K T Blundell, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, I T W Fletcher, K R Guy, R A Overton and G C W Reynolds

IN ATTENDANCE: J Eatough (Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services), P Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and D Moseley (Democratic Services Support Officer)

BRC-01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

BRC-02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

BRC-03 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

BRC-04 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Democratic Services Manager gave a verbal update on the arrangements for the Review of Parliamentary Boundaries. He reminded the Committee that the Review planned for completion in October 2013 was defeated in the House of Commons and advised that the Review was now planned to commence in Spring 2016 but it was unclear at this stage whether the process would begin afresh or pick up where the 2013 Review had stalled.

The Democratic Services Manager explained the three stages of the Review as follows:-

- Publication of initial proposals and 12 week consultation including public hearings at which Councillors could give evidence
- A further consultation period of four weeks during which comments on the representations made would be sought
- Revised proposals and eight week consultation period

The review was expected to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600 across nine regions saving over £12m. The 2013 Review had proposed a doughnut constituency which would take in some Shropshire area Wards (ie Bridgnorth, Broseley, Much Wenlock, and Worfield) to create two seats: a central urban constituency (Telford) and a rural constituency.

The Electoral Register was due to be published on 1 December 2015 and this information, together with GO Mapping data, would be sent to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission. Whilst the Commission would consider other factors such as local ties and geographical features in the proposals, elector numbers were the primary factor and, whilst the Borough was a growing town and had been able to protect its elector numbers, this did not mean that if the proposed tolerance levels were met the boundaries would remain unchanged -

changing numbers within neighbouring constituencies may result in a need to alter boundaries. Tolerance levels were likely to be between 10% more or 10% less than the UK electoral quota.

Members requested elector numbers for each of the Borough Wards and constituencies. The Democratic Services Manager pointed out that some of the borough ward boundaries were slightly different than in 2013 and there had been some growth from housing development and he agreed to clarify whether it would be possible to make a case for population growth but his initial thoughts were that the figures would need to be exceptional to result in changes. He also clarified that the projected timescale was for the Review to begin in Spring 2016, possibly as late as May 2016, and be completed by January 2017 in order to be implemented in 2018 ahead of the next elections. He agreed to circulate links to the Guide to the 2013 Review and relevant associated documentation.

The Committee agreed that the Democratic Services Manager should continue to liaise with the Chair to set future meeting dates when there was more to report.

BRC-05 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

The Chair indicated that he had been approached about a number of Parish boundaries. He did not consider that a piecemeal approach to Community Governance Reviews would be useful in view of the resources required and it would be more productive to write to all Town and Parish Councils to ask whether their boundaries needed to be reviewed and conduct the work at the same time.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that work on Community Governance Reviews should commence in 2017 in readiness for the 2019 election. Even if work was carried out earlier, the effective date would still be 2019. He also confirmed that the warding arrangements made by the 2015 Boundary Review had been protected for five years. Newport Town Council had made inquiries about a review of the boundary with Chetwynd Aston and Woodcote Parish and Members agreed that preliminary discussions with both Parish Councils would be useful.

The Assistant Director: Legal, Democracy and People Services considered that it was important that the process for Community Governance Reviews was reviewed and approved by the Committee in advance as there would be scarce resources to carry out the required work. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to circulate current Guidance and indicated that Reviews could take approximately 12 months to complete.

Members also requested that the Democratic Services Manager investigated issues regarding:-

- Whether the size of a Parish Council could be increased to accommodate population growth
- Inconsistency in the warding arrangements for residents at Humber Lane
- Inconsistent borough and parish warding arrangements for the St Georges Sports & Social Club.

The meeting ended at 6.40pm

Chairman:

Date: