

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 1 April 2014.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A J King, MBE (Vice-Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr J Elenor, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr A Terry and Mr R Truelove

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)), Mr R Hallett (Head of Business Intelligence), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

13. Minutes - 23 September 2013

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area

(Item 4)

(1) Mr Wild introduced a report which updated the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) Electoral Review of Kent County Council's area. The report set out the principles outlined by the LGBCE and the timetable for the review.

(2) Mr Hallett circulated the latest electorate population forecasts to 2020 which updated information on the average electoral district sizes for each of the Council Member options. The forecasts took into account the latest advice from District Councils on the quantity and phasing of new housing to 2020, which updated the table set out as Appendix 1 in the report. Work was being progressed with the ward level forecasts which will be the building blocks to define the new electoral divisions.

(3) Members discussed the data provided and asked a number of questions which were responded to by Officers.

(4) A Member referred to the changing role of the County Council and Elected Members over the next 10 years and the importance of including this in the discussion on the size of the County Council in 2020. A view was expressed that the workload of Elected Members had changed over the years, with factors such as the increased use of email from constituents having an impact on workloads. The importance of looking at Kent County Council's position with the local government family was mentioned.

(5) A Member stated that it would be helpful to consider the implications of the ratio of County Councillors to electorate and suggested that to expect Members to represent over 20,000 constituents with no staff support was unrealistic. It was noted that the Commission had suggested that County Councillors may have a more strategic role than District Councillors in relation to their electorate and therefore they did not have to deal with as many day to day issues on behalf of their electorate, but this was disputed by Committee Members.

(6) In response to a question on recommending to the LGBCE the creation of only single electoral divisions, Mr Wild explained that this was something that the County Council could ask for and the LGBCE would have to go along with this. However, the LGBCE's prime driver would be the achievement of an equality of electorate for each electoral division and they would work towards achieving this aim.

(7) The Chairman reminded the Committee that representatives of the LGBCE would be providing a briefing for all Members of the County Council on 30 April 2014 and that there would be an opportunity for Members to put questions to them. The LGBCE had indicated that they would take account of an agreed cross party view on the number of Elected Members from the County Council but that this would need to be supported by evidence such as the projected population/electorate figures.

(8) The Committee discussed the contribution that it would be making to the view to be submitted to the LGBCE. The Chairman suggested that a meeting of the Committee should be held following the LGBCE briefing and that before this meeting took place the political groups could take a view on what they considered to be appropriate Council size to recommend to the LGBCE.

(9) RESOLVED that the report and discussion be noted.

15. 2013 County Council Election Accounts

(Item 5)

(1) The Committee received a report which confirmed the current status of the District Council's Accounts for the County Council Elections in May 2013 which included an analysis of the costs.

(2) Mr Sass confirmed that all District Councils had accepted the final figures and payments had been made, there were no outstanding matters.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FOR EXEMPT ITEMS

(Item 6)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

17. URGENT BUSINESS

(Item)

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had decided to take the exempt minute from the meeting on 23 September 2013 as an urgent item due to the need for the Committee to approve it as a correct record at the earliest opportunity.

18. Exempt Minute - 23 September 2013

(Item 7)

RESOLVED that the exempt minute of the meeting held on 23 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.