

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 5 June 2014.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A J King, MBE (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Baldock, Mr M A C Balfour (Substitute for Mr D L Brazier), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr I S Chittenden, Ms A Harrison (Substitute for Mr R Truelove), Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr A Terry

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

19. Minutes - 1 April 2014
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. Membership
(Item 4)

It was noted that Mr M Baldock had replaced Mr J Elenor as a Member of this Committee.

21. Electoral Review of Kent County Council's Area
(Item 5)

(1) The Chairman clarified that the aims of the meeting were to consider putting forward a recommendation to County Council on Council size for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Electoral Review (LGBCE) and to give consideration as to whether this proposal should include two Member or single Member divisions. He emphasised that discussions on individual division boundaries would take place later in the process.

(2) Mr Sass introduced a report which updated Members on the LGBCE's review of Kent County Council's area. He reminded the Committee that the deadline for submissions on Council size to the LGBCE was 8 August 2014. The LGBCE would take into consideration three broad areas which were the County Council's Governance arrangements, the Scrutiny function and the role of Members in their local community. A survey of Members was being carried out in order to gather evidence on their work in their communities. Appendix 2 to the report gave an update of the ratio of registered electors per elected Member for the Cipfa nearest neighbour authorities.

(3) Mr Hallett explained that Appendix 3 to the report contained one possible option to test whether a Council of 84 Members for Kent was viable at a statistical level, he apologised for any confusion caused by referring to this as a proposed option.

(4) Members asked officers a number of questions to inform their discussion. Ms Mayes confirmed that the electorate forecast for 2020 took into account information from District Councils regarding housing growth and planning applications. Mr Hallett stated that the final outcome from the current boundary reviews in Swale and Shepway would be taken into account at the appropriate time.

(5) The Committee then discussed the formulation of a proposal on Council size for recommendation to the County Council.

(6) Mr A J King, MBE proposed and Mrs P A V Stockell seconded the proposal that:

“Officers be instructed to prepare a proposal for submission to the County Council based on the Council size remaining at 84 Members”

(7) Mr M Baldock proposed and Mr A Terry seconded and the following amendment to the motion:

“Officers be given leeway to increase the proposed number of Members by up to 5 if any of these numbers improves overall parity of electorate size.”

(8) Members debated the amendment and on being put to the vote it was lost.

(9) Mr A H T Bowles proposed and Mr M A C Balfour seconded the following amendment to the motion:

“Officers be given discretion to produce a proposal based on 1 additional or 1 less Member if that overcomes a discrepancy in electorate size”

(10) On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

(11) The Committee debated the original motion which on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

(12) The Committee then considered the issue of single or two Member divisions. Mr Wild reminded the Committee that if the County Council formally requested the LGBCE to conduct a single Member review the LGBCE would be bound by this.

(13) The Chairman stated that a further meeting of the Committee would be held to consider the draft proposal before it was published for the meeting of the County Council on 17 July 2014.

(14) RESOLVED that Officers be instructed to prepare a proposal for submission to the County Council meeting on 17 July 2014 based on the Council size remaining at 84 Members and that as part of this proposal the LGBCE be asked to note this Council's preference for single Member divisions where possible.

