

24 August 2015 – At a meeting of the Committee held at County Hall, Chichester.

Present:

Mrs Arculus (Chairman), Mr Barnard, Mr Brown, Mr Burrett, Ms Goldsmith, Mrs Mullins and Dr Walsh.

Apologies were received from Mr G L Jones and Mr Lanzer.

Mr Acraman and Mr S J Oakley were also in attendance.

Declarations of Interest

69. No interests were declared.

Minutes of the Governance Committee

70. Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Electoral Review Panel – Boundary Review of West Sussex County Council

71. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law, Assurance and Strategy setting out the County Council's response to the boundary review for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), as recommended by the Electoral Review Panel (ERP) (copy appended to the signed minutes). With reference to Appendix 2, the Committee was informed that two further responses had been received to the ERP's draft proposals. Firstly, Chichester District Council had confirmed its support for the proposals for the Chichester district area and, secondly, East Grinstead Town Council had no objections to the proposed changes in the Mid Sussex area. Members were also asked to note the following minor corrections to Appendices 1 and 3:

- Appendix 1: page 39 – (f) – Horsham Hurst – amend '(Millais school area)' to read '(Pollard Drive area)'
- Appendix 3: page 11 – amalgamate (h) and (i) to read '(h) Horsham Tanbridge & Broadbridge Heath'

72. Mr Acraman, as Chairman of the ERP, introduced the report and reminded the Committee of the time table as set out in paragraph 4 of the report. In relation to the scheme for Crawley, which was the only proposal which did not have the unanimous support of the ERP, he commented that it had proved impossible in the time available to devise a scheme that everyone could support. However, he re-emphasised that the members in Crawley who did not support the proposed scheme had the option of putting an alternative proposal to the LGBCE.

73. Mr Acraman informed the Committee that at its last meeting the ERP had adopted revised proposals in the Burgess Hill area of Mid Sussex put forward by two local members and Hassocks Parish Council. The new proposals avoided the

splitting of the parishes of Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common but meant that the boundaries within Burgess Hill had had to be reviewed.

74. In Horsham, 12-member and 11-member schemes had been devised to allow for either a 69- or 70-seat Council. Mr Acraman said that the ERP had included the 12-member scheme in its proposals as the LGBCE had stated its preference for a 70-seat Council. However, it had also recommended that the 11-member scheme should be submitted separately to the LGBCE in case the LGBCE were persuaded to adopt a 69-seat Council.

75. The Chairman thanked Mr Acraman, the other members of the ERP and officers for their work in devising the proposals noting there had been a very tight timescale for a considerable amount of detailed work.

76. Mr Burrett queried the figures for 2015 in the penultimate paragraph of page 2 of Appendix 1 and suggested that there were 14 proposals that were outside the band rather than 10. It was confirmed that this was correct and that the response would be amended accordingly. Mr Burrett also questioned the accuracy of the electorate figures for Crawley included within the text on page 33 of Appendix 1. After discussion the Committee agreed that as the electorate figures were included in the tables in Appendix 1 they should be deleted from the proposal text.

77. The Committee discussed rationale behind recommendation (2) that the 11-member scheme for Horsham should also be sent to the LGBCE. Mr Acraman explained that the average number of members for the total electorate was 69.5 and the LGBCE had rounded the figure up to reach its 'preferred figure' of 70 members. The ERP was therefore of the view that it would be prudent to submit both schemes for Horsham but with a stated preference for the 12-member scheme. The Committee expressed some concern at that proposal and was reminded that the LGBCE had stressed the importance of clarity of response and strong arguments for a scheme that met the criteria. On balance therefore the Committee decided that it would be better not to send the 11-member scheme for Horsham to the LGBCE but resolved that the covering letter to the LGBCE should mention that it was available on request.

78. Members discussed the proposals for Crawley and differing views were expressed. Mrs Mullins thanked the ERP for its work and commented that the majority of members in Crawley preferred the original proposal considered by the ERP to the one currently recommended which they felt ignored natural boundaries such as the A23. Whilst accepting that the new Forge Wood estate would increase the electorate significantly on the eastern side of Crawley, there was also significant development planned on the western side and near the boundary with Horsham. She urged the Committee to adopt a minimal change proposal for Crawley or to submit both schemes.

79. Mr Burrett commented that there had to be change in Crawley or by 2021 some divisions would be far too large. The proposed scheme gave co-terminosity for 11 out of 15 borough council wards which was not too bad. Although he was not a member of the ERP and had not been able to attend the last meeting he said he understood that there had been strong support for the current proposal at the meeting. He felt the scheme addressed a number of issues in Crawley and achieved the best electoral equality as required by the LGBCE.

80. The Leader commented that the ERP had been given the responsibility of drawing up a scheme and had considered the proposals in detail. She did not therefore feel it would be appropriate for the Committee to revisit the decision. She reiterated that those who did not agree with the proposal could make their own submission to the LGBCE.

81. Overall the Committee appreciated the arguments on both sides for Crawley and felt that it was a balanced judgement. It accepted that the ERP had spent a considerable amount of time looking at the proposals and that there was no perfect solution given the geography of the area. On balance therefore the Committee supported the ERP's proposal as the best available option and did not support the submission of two alternative schemes.

82. On page 7 of Appendix 1, the proposals for Adur, Mr Acraman requested that the words 'As per the County Council's submission to the Boundary Commission,' under the heading 'Divisions affected: All' should be deleted and this was agreed. It was also agreed that Mr Acraman and Mr Burrett would speak to officers about other minor amendments for inclusion in the final version of the response.

83. The recommendations were agreed as set out below. Mrs Mullins asked that it be recorded that she supported the recommendations with the exception of the proposals for Crawley.

84. Resolved -

- (1) That Appendix 1 to the report be approved as the County Council's formal response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on its consultation on County Council divisions, subject to the minor amendments set out above; and
- (2) That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England should be informed in the covering letter that an 11-member scheme for Horsham was available on request.

Member Development Group: Appointments

85. Following the changes to the Member Development Group approved by the County Council on 24 July 2015, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Law, Assurance and Strategy on the appointment of members to the Group (copy appended to the signed minutes).

86. The Chairman reported the following additional nominations:

Conservative Group: Mrs Duncton, Mr Hillier, Mrs Jupp and Mr Patel

Labour Group: Mrs Mullins

87. Resolved - That the appointment of members to the Member Development Group, as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report and minute 55 above, be approved.

Date of Next Meeting

88. Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at 2.15 p.m. on Monday, 14 September 2015.
The meeting ended at 11.54 a.m.

Chairman