

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable on Thursday, 27 August 2009.

PRESENT

Cllr K Sharer (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs P Rawcliffe
R Stay

Cllr Mrs P E Turner MBE

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R A Baker
P A Blaine
Mrs J G Lawrence

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
K C Matthews
P Snelling

Member in Attendance: Cllr J Murray

GPC/09/14 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from the following:-

- Councillor Blaine (Councillor Snelling was present as his substitute)
- Councillor Baker (Councillor Matthews was present as his substitute)
- Councillor Jane Lawrence (Councillor Mrs Chapman, MBE was present as her substitute).

In view of Cllr Jane Lawrence's absence, Councillor Sharer chaired the meeting.

GPC/09/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GPC/09/16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

GPC/09/17 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no announcements or matters of communication from the Chairman.

GPC/09/18 **Public Questions, Statements and Deputations**

There were no questions, statements or deputations from members of the public.

GPC/09/19 **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

GPC/09/20 **Electoral Review of Central Bedfordshire; Council Size for the Authority**

The General Purposes Committee noted that its Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group had met on three occasions to consider proposals for the Council size for Central Bedfordshire. The Working Group's conclusions were drawn together in a draft submission to the Boundary Committee for England which was now before the Committee. Members noted that the next step was to consider the draft submission and refer it together with recommendations from the Committee to Council.

In considering the submission, members of the Working Group who were present at the meeting thanked the officers, in particular Brian Dunleavy, Electoral Services Project Officer, for the invaluable support that they had provided to the Working Group.

Members noted that the draft submission was a comprehensive document setting out the methodology and the background information which had led to the conclusion drawn by the Working Party on the optimum size of the Council.

In discussing the submission, Members asked for some minor drafting changes, including changing the term "frontline councillor" to "ward councillor". A Member queried what was meant by the reference to "discounting members for the purpose of seat allocation" in paragraph 4.3 and suggested that this wording perhaps needed to be clarified. Some additional wording was also suggested to be added after the final bullet point on page 5 of the submission to reflect the need to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to respond to the emerging localism agenda.

Members discussed the recommendations before them. It was noted that the former County and District Councils had between them comprised a total of 136 councillors' places and that the recommendation for 66 members represented a considerable reduction on this. Reference was also made to the developing role of councillors as community champions and to the expectation that as housing developments were completed, there would be increasing numbers of people living locally drawing upon the support of councillors.

Members considered that the submission, as amended, provided a robust case for the recommendation to the Boundary Committee that there should be 66 elected councillors for Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED:-

1. **that the conclusions of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group in relation to the Council size for Central Bedfordshire, be endorsed.**
2. **that the draft submission to the Boundary Committee for England on Council Size for Central Bedfordshire be revised in accordance with the amendments referred to in the preamble above.**

RECOMMENDED:

1. **that the recommendation that there should be 66 elected Councillors for Central Bedfordshire, be endorsed; and**
2. **that the submission to the Boundary Committee for England on Council Size for Central Bedfordshire, be approved.**

(Note: a copy of the submission, which has been revised to take account of the amendments referred to in resolution 2 above, is attached.)

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.00 a.m.)

Chairman.....

Date.....