

COUNCIL MEETING – 7 JANUARY 2010

Recommendations to Council from General Purposes Committee: 17 December 2009

Minute No. Working Group Report on Proposed Electoral Arrangements GPC/09/06

The Committee considered the draft submission to be made in response to the consultation by the Boundary Committee for England on the number and location of electoral wards for Central Bedfordshire. It was noted that a recommendation from the Committee would be considered by full Council at its meeting on 7 January 2010.

The Committee noted the presentation from Councillor Rawcliffe, Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group which the Committee had set up to enable detailed consideration of the associated matters. He explained that the Working Group had established a preference for separating town and rural communities into separate wards, and had also tried to restrict the variance from the Boundary Committee's preferred number of electorate per 1, 2 and 3 members wards to no more than 10%.

Comments were made that the Boundary Committee's decision that there should be 59 elected members for Central Bedfordshire and not the 66 recommended by the Council meant that it was necessary to be pragmatic in the approach to determining the number and location of wards as the ideal, based on additional numbers of members, was not a possibility.

The Working Party had put forward the majority political group's preferred solution and had also allowed the Liberal Democrat Group's solution to be submitted to this Committee. The Committee therefore had two proposals before it for consideration; the Conservative Group's preferred option was set out at Appendix A of the papers and the Liberal Democrat Group's was set out at Appendix B.

Councillor Rawcliffe thanked the Working Group for the work they had put in to achieve the proposals before the Committee. He also paid tribute to the invaluable help the Working Group had received from Stephen Cooke and Brian Dunleavy who had provided detailed guidance to the Working Group and had worked through the many comments and suggestions which had been made.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Rawcliffe for the considerable work he had carried out as Chairman of the Working Group.

A discussion ensued and it became evident that the different political groups had different approaches and preferences regarding numbers of elected members for each ward.

RESOLVED:-

1. that having considered the conclusions of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group in relation to the number and location of wards for Central Bedfordshire, the Committee determined that it would recommend to Council to approve the pattern of wards as shown in Appendix A set out in the report as the Conservative Group's option;
2. that the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Group and the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to prepare the draft submission to be presented to Council on 7 January 2010 including taking account of any further responses to consultation received in the intervening period prior to the Council meeting;
3. to thank the officers, Stephen Cooke and Brian Dunleavy, for the invaluable help they had provided whilst supporting the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Party

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

1. **to endorse the proposed pattern of wards set out in Appendix A of the submitted report;**
2. **to take into consideration any responses received from the Town and Parish Councils;**
3. **to approve the Submission to the Boundary Committee for England on the number and location of electoral wards for Central Bedfordshire;**
4. **to authorise the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Group, to respond to questions raised by the Boundary Committee regarding the Submission.**