

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL PANEL

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2008 at 5.30 pm
in the Committee Room, Borough Offices, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor P S Farmer (Chairman)
Councillors Bradbury, Clifton-Brown, Hale and Mrs P A Warby

BY INVITATION: Councillor Ray (Portfolio Holder for Performance and
Organisational Development)

1. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

2. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Farmer be elected Chairman of this Panel.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Mrs P A Warby be appointed Vice-Chairman of this Panel.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cox and Oliver.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declarations of Interests

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

7. Consultation on the Proposal to Move the Date of Local Elections in 2009

The Panel considered Report Z46 (previously circulated) which sought consideration of a consultation response to the Department of Communities and Local Government on a proposal to move the date of local elections in 2009.

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) was consulting on a proposal to move the date of local elections in 2009. The default date of scheduled local government elections each year was the first Thursday in May, which was 7 May in 2009. CLG was consulting on moving the local elections to 4 June 2009, the anticipated date of the next European Parliamentary elections. There was a precedent for doing this as the last European Parliamentary elections in 2004 were combined with local elections where these were scheduled. Also, the past three Parliamentary elections had been combined with local elections. In each case the combination was with County Council elections and those elections recorded almost double the usual level of turnout as a result. However, in St Edmundsbury, European Parliamentary elections had generally had a lower turnout than local elections, so increased turnout for the local elections would be unlikely to be achieved in 2009.

The consultation could be summarised to the following four questions:-

- (1) Do you agree with the proposal to hold combined European Parliamentary and local elections in 2009?;
- (2) If the elections were combined should any parish council elections scheduled for 7 May 2009 also be moved?;
- (3) What are the practical issues in combining the elections?; and
- (4) What action should be taken to address these practical issues?

Attached as Appendix 1 to the report was a copy of the consultation document issued by CLG. It was clear from the document that the Government favoured the combination and that the focus of the consultation was on recognising the issues raised by combination and identifying solutions to them. The report detailed administrative concerns associated with combining European Parliamentary and local elections in 2009.

The Panel considered the issues in detail and agreed that the proposal to hold combined European Parliamentary and local elections in 2009 was acceptable provided that the concerns raised in Section 4 of the report were addressed by the Government.

RESOLVED:-

That the Panel give delegated authority to the Head of Chief Executive's Office, in consultation with the Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Panel, to draft a response to the consultation on the proposal to move the date of local elections in 2009 based on the contents of Section 4 of Report Z46.



RECOMMENDED:- That the Council approves the response to the consultation on the proposal to move the date of local elections in 2009 and be sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government by the 11 August 2008 deadline.

8. Member Development Record/Portfolio

The Panel considered Report Z47 (previously circulated) which sought approval to the introduction of a Member Development Portfolio and to the core details to be recorded.

On 18 March 2008 the Panel requested that officers investigate producing a portfolio in which Members could hold information relating to their development, both development undertaken within St Edmundsbury and, if desired or appropriate, courses or skills gained from other aspects of life. It was considered that the most cost effective way to provide a portfolio was to provide an A4 ring binder of the type used for the Councillors' handbook. Inside, the folder could be divided into a series of sections to allow the following to be kept/recorded:-

- (1) notes from events and any certificates issued for attendance;
- (2) a running record of events attended;
- (3) a copy of the Member Development Plan completed annually;
- (4) copies of the core skills and accompanying guidance; and
- (5) copies of the Job Descriptions for the role held by the Councillor.

Attached as Appendix 1 to the report was an example of a record card which could be developed to capture information about development activities undertaken within the Council or externally, those skills and expertise which a Councillor already had, the opportunity to record other activities which had led to increased knowledge or skills.

A folder would be issued to each Councillor for them to hold at home. It would be for each Councillor to decide to what extent they wished to make use of the folder.

The Panel were very supportive of the introduction of a Member development record because it would be useful in the compilation of the Member Development Plan and in other forums where Member development was discussed. During the consideration of the list of contents of the development activity record card it was agreed that the list of 'Core Development Activities' should include an overview of the licensing functions and under the 'Desirable' heading chairing meetings should be included. The Panel emphasised that the record must have the ability to record the significant number of activities undertaken by the majority of Members, especially long serving members.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) a Member Development folder be developed as outlined in Section 3 of Report Z47 be produced to provide Members with a place to record development undertaken and keep associated paperwork; and***
- (2) the list of recommended core activities as listed at Appendix 1 to the Report Z47, amended to include licensing functions, be included.***

9. Members' Attendance Statistics: 2007/2008

The Panel received and noted Report Z48 (previously circulated) which provided the Members' Attendance Statistics for 2007/2008.

The Panel had been charged by Council to receive the annual attendance statistics and also that these be preceded by a list of all the meetings and activities undertaken by Councillors that were not recorded in the statistics. The background information to the compilation of the statistics was attached as Appendix A to the report and the actual attendance statistics were attached as Appendix B.

10. Representation on Outside Bodies: Annual Report 2007/2008

The Panel considered Report Z49 (previously circulated) which detailed the information collected from the annual returns from representatives of the Borough Council on outside bodies for the 2007/2008 reporting year.

The Panel had been charged to produce an annual report for Council based on returns from the Borough Council's representatives on outside bodies. Of the 43 forms requested, 33 had been received, 6 were not now required and 4 had not been returned (9%). The report detailed the summary of key points raised on the returns and discussed each one in turn. It was agreed that the report to Council should include points raised in the returns with the Panel's response.

The Panel was pleased to note that no return recommended that the Council should no longer be represented on an outside body. The Panel noted that representatives of Community Associations considered it appropriate for all Ward Members to attend meetings. In addition it was noted that there was overwhelming support for the work of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the representation allocated by the Council. In response to the suggestion that a review be undertaken to the structure and composition of the West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust, it was considered appropriate that this be held in abeyance until the outcome of the Local Government Review was known. The suggestion that the membership on the Clare Country Park be reduced from two to one was supported provided that there was no requirement from Suffolk County Council to have more than one representative. However, the suggestion that the membership on the Haverhill Housing Partnership Performance Panel be reduced from three to two members was not supported as it was the original intention that there should be three Borough Council Representatives, one each from Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and the Rural Areas. There was no support for the suggestion that Councillor Marks represent both the County Council and the Borough Council on the Suffolk Rail Policy Group as there was potential for the Borough Council and County Council to have different view points.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) the Council considers the Annual Report 2008 from the representatives of outside bodies based on Section 3 of Report and to include the Panel's comments as above; and***
- (2) approve that all forms returned by the Council's representatives be viewed on the Intranet under 'Member's Corner'.***

11. Amendments to the Constitution

The Panel considered Report Z50 (previously circulated) which proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution.

The Panel had, as part of its Terms of Reference, *'to recommend amendments to the Council's constitution to full Council'*.

Appendix A detailed the proposed amendments to the Constitution associated with the licensing function. Appendix B detailed two further amendments associated with the Finance Procedure Rules and Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

The report detailed some amendments to the delegations to the Licensing Service Section following a review by the Head of Environmental Health and Housing and the Licensing Services Manager of the delegations associated with the licensing function. Most of the amendments/new delegations to the Licensing Services Manager formalised the existing sub delegations that had been largely in practice since June 2005.

The Panel received a presentation from the Licensing Services Manager detailing the reasons for the amendments to the Constitution. It was noted that the amendments in respect of D3 (b) paragraphs 24, 28 and 32 should include reference to the Animal Welfare Act 2006.



RECOMMENDED:-

That the amendments to the Constitution proposed in Appendix A, as amended to include reference to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 as appropriate, and Appendix B of Report Z50 be approved.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

The Panel confirmed that meetings would be held on:-

Tuesday 2 September; and
Monday 17 November 2008.

Both meetings to commence at 5.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6.16 pm.

**P S FARMER
CHAIRMAN**