

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL WORKING PARTY

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 8 September 2011 at 5.00 pm
in Room GFR12, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs P A Warby (Chairman)
Councillors Beckwith (substituting for Redhead), Clifton-Brown,
Cox, Farmer and Thorndyke

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

11. Substitutes

The Working Party was informed of the following substitution:-

Councillor Beckwith substituting for Councillor Redhead.

12. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Redhead, who wished it be recorded that he could not attend this meeting as it again clashed with the meeting of the Haverhill Area Working Party.

13. Minutes

Councillor Cox questioned the accuracy of the final paragraph of minute 8, Payment of Members' Travel Expenses. He also stated he was not consulted on the examination of 'the format of the claim forms in order to make them more relevant to Members'.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(Councillor Cox wished it be recorded that he did not vote to confirm that the minutes were an accurate record.)

14. Declarations of Interests

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

15. Polling District Review

(Councillors Farmer and Mrs Warby declared personal interests as members of Bury St Edmunds Town Council and stated that they were not part of that Council's deliberations on this item. Both Members remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

The Working Party considered Report C116 (previously circulated) which contained the results of the Review of Polling Districts and appropriate recommendations.

The Electoral Administration Act required every Council to conduct a review of its designation of polling districts and polling places at least once every four years and the Borough Council's last review was completed in December 2007. The most efficient and cost effective time to make any changes was when the newly updated register was published on 1 December.

At the beginning of July 2011 a letter outlining the review process, and a background document, were circulated to the following people:-

Borough Councillors;
County Councillors for divisions in St Edmundsbury;
Chairmen of Parish Councils;
Party Agents; and
Acting Returning Officers of the West Suffolk and South Suffolk constituencies.

A link was put on the home page of the Council's website alerting visitors to the site that the review was taking place. The link allowed people to view the consultation information, and this documentation was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The information included background information, Schedule of Polling Districts and Schedule of Polling Places.

Appendix 3 provided a breakdown of the eleven consultation responses received to date. Of these, seven responses were from Parish/Town Councils and four from Borough Councillors. The Electoral Services Manager tabled a paper that contained details of four further consultation responses, of which three had recommended no change. Stansfield Parish Council had suggested that Denston and Poslingford should be merged with polling in Stansfield. However, as no indications of support for this proposal had been received from Poslingford and Denston no action could be taken until further consultation had taken place.

Appendix 2 contained information provided by the Borough Council's Planning Section on the anticipated areas for significant growth within the Borough up to the end of the four year period.

The Working Party noted that it should take the following into consideration during its deliberations:-

- (1) it should seek to provide all electors with as reasonable facilities for voting as were practical;
- (2) it should have regard to accessibility when making any designations for polling places; and
- (3) where areas were parished each parish should normally be a polling district in its own right unless there was a compelling reason otherwise.

Additionally, the Working Party were reminded that polling should take place within the Polling District except in exceptional circumstances.

The Working Party considered the issues raised in the report on an individual basis and recommended accordingly. However, none of the recommendations were amended.

It was agreed that officers would:-

- (1) contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to ascertain the procedures of ward reviews; and
- (2) 'double check' whether Cangle Junction was located in the Haverhill North Ward.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) Abbeygate Ward (BAF) in Bury St Edmunds be split into two polling districts with the divide being along Parkway;**
- (2) the schedule of Polling Places be amended by removing the entry for the Station Ward of Honington Parish (BAZ) polling with the Village Ward of Honington Parish (WAY);**
- (3) the schedule of Polling Districts be amended to reflect the boundary change made by the Community Governance Review with regard to BAO1 Village Ward of Fornham All Saints to BAO Fornham All Saints and BAO2 Town Ward of Fornham All Saints; and**
- (4) the schedule of Polling Districts be amended to reflect the creation of 2 new polling districts in the Abbeygate Ward in Bury St Edmunds.**

16. Member Development: Update

The Working Party considered Report C117 (previously circulated) which:-

- (1) provided an update on progress with the Member Development Charter Action Plan;
- (2) sought agreement on the remainder of the 2011/2012 Member Development Programme; and
- (3) monitored the Member Development Budget.

The Working Party had previously set an Action Plan of eight recommendations arising from the Council's assessment in respect of the East of England Local Government Association (LGA) Charter for Elected Member Development. The first three recommendations were essential in order for the Council to re-achieve Charter status, and the remaining actions, whilst desirable, were not essential. The Action Plan was contained within Section One of the report together with details on progress to date in achieving the actions.

Assessors for the Charter, the South East Employers (SEE) had made a short visit in July 2011, in order to assess the progress that had been made since their assessment in October 2010. The assessors were pleased with progress and the only barrier to re-achieving Charter status appeared to be the very low number of Training Needs Analysis (TNA) forms that had been received. At the time of their visit only 11 TNA forms had been received and the assessors advised that, in order to re-achieve the Charter, a minimum of 60% (28) of the forms would need to be received, including all members of the Democratic Renewal Working Party and all members of the Cabinet. At the date of this meeting, 36 forms had now been received, 80%. SEE had advised that, although the required number of TNA forms had been returned, they would be unable to re-award the Charter until they could see that a Member Development Programme had been put in place which had been clearly informed by the TNA's. Once a

programme had been developed, a review would be undertaken by SEE, following which they should be in a position to re-award the Charter.

An analysis of TNA's returned by Members was attached as Appendix A to the report, together with other comments made by Members regarding the provision of training and comments received on post-training evaluation returns.

The Working Party considered the analysis of TNA's (Appendix A) together with other information contained within the report and concluded that in addition to the Member Development activities already planned for Members of the Development Control and Licensing and Regulatory Committees and on Emergency Planning, the following topics should be added to the Member Development Programme for the remainder of 2011/2012:-

- (a) Local Government Finance;
- (b) Presentation Skills and Public Speaking;
- (c) Dealing with the Media;
- (d) Dealing with ward issues/community engagement; and
- (e) Localism bill/legislation developments.

In addition the Working Party considered it appropriate that:-

- (a) visits to the waste recycling plant at Great Blakenham, and to the CCTV control room should be arranged, and that Members should be advised that if they wished to visit other Council locations detailed in Section 2.7 they should contact the relevant officer; and
- (b) when a member development session was repeated it should be arranged for a different time of day.

The Working Party noted that it would appear that it would be towards the end of the current calendar year before the Council was likely to re-achieve Charter Status.

Attached as Appendix B to the report were details of the expenditure charged to the two Member Development Budgets. A budget of £8,100 was used for the main Member Development Programme, which included funding externally sourced sessions which were delivered in-house, places on sessions offered by other councils or organisations, achievement of the Member Development Charter and other costs. There was a further budget of £2,900 which paid for attendance at external conferences attended by individual Members. During the discussion it was agreed that £2,000 be allocated towards the seven module planning 'training' sessions currently being commissioned by the Interim Joint Head of Planning.

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the items listed above be included in the Member Development Programme for 2011/2012; and
- (2) £2,000 be allocated to planning training sessions.

17. Amendments to the Constitution

The Working Party considered Report C118 (previously circulated) which sought consideration on whether there should be a full review of the Council's Constitution, and sought approval for amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

The Democratic Renewal Working Party had, as part of its Terms of Reference, 'to recommend amendments to the Council's Constitution to full Council'.

The Working Party considered changes to the Constitution on an ad-hoc basis, as the need arose. The Democratic Services Section fully updated the Constitution on an annual basis based on the decisions taken by full Council, and the new edition was then distributed to officers and Members upon request. The Borough Council's intranet and internet sites were also updated at the same time. It had been suggested that amendments to the Constitution should be only undertaken as part of an annual review. Councillor Cox considered it more appropriate that changes to the Constitution should be considered annually and presented to the Annual Meeting of Council for approval. However, there was a consensus among the Working Party that amendments to the Constitution were, almost certainly, needed as an issue was identified, and could not wait until an annual review was undertaken. It was agreed that the status quo remain.

Paragraph 15.4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules related to Call-in and Urgency and was replicated within the report. The Mayor could approve that where a decision taken by the Cabinet was considered to be urgent it need not be subject to the call-in rules and could be implemented immediately. However, it was considered more appropriate for the Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace the Mayor/Deputy Mayor in making this type of decision as the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny was already the designated post holder for other exceptions within the decision making process.



RECOMMENDED:-

That Paragraph 15.4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Call in and Urgency), be amended and that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be replaced by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee respectively.

18. Dates of Next Meetings

A discussion was held on meeting days and dates. It was agreed that the Working Party would next meet, as already agreed, on Thursday 24 November 2011 at 5.00 pm. At this meeting, dates would be proposed for meetings of the Working Party in February and April 2012.

The meeting concluded at 6.41 pm.

**MRS P A WARBY
CHAIRMAN**