
Democratic Renewal Working Party



Minutes of a meeting of the **Democratic Renewal Working Party St Edmundsbury Democratic Renewal Working Party** held on **Tuesday 18 November 2014** at **5.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds

Present:

Chairman to be elected

Patrick Chung
Robert Clifton-Brown
Paul Farmer
Helen Levack

Derek Redhead
Jim Thorndyke
Patricia Warby

1. **Election of Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Mrs P A Warby be elected Chairman of the Working Party for 2014/2015.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

3. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. **Appointment of Vice Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor J Thorndyke be elected Vice-Chairman of the Working Party for 2014/2015.

6. **Members' Attendance Statistics**

With the permission of the Chairman, the Democratic Services Manager presented a written briefing note on members' attendance statistics for the information of the Working Party given recent media coverage and freedom of information requests. Members were reminded that, at a meeting of the Working Party on 2 May 2013, they had resolved to not compile members' attendance statistics in future years due to the scope of the report not covering the full duties and responsibilities of Councillors.

In April 2014, cabinet members had suggested informally that attendance statistics could be recorded and published online as part of the implementation of a new Committee Management System that was due to be launched later that year provided that an explanation was provided that the figures were not an accurate reflection of all the meetings attended and duties undertaken by Councillors.

The Democratic Services Manager informed members that the new system had been implemented on 12 November 2014 and attendance would be recorded and published on the website from this date. To respond to freedom of information requests, statistics were being compiled for the period from May 2013 until 12 November 2014 and would also be published on the new website in due course. The Working Party requested that this briefing be shared with all councillors and noted the update.

7. **Polling District Review**

The Electoral Services Manager introduced this report which reviewed the designation of polling districts in the borough. The report described the consultation process and gave details of the responses received. Two of the responses regarding ward and borough boundaries had not been included in the report as they fell outside of the remit of this review which was only able to consider polling district boundaries.

The report highlighted two main areas where further representations had been received and these had been investigated further as follows.

St Olaves Ward consisted of one polling district and one polling station located at the New Bury Community Centre. The proposals received both suggested splitting this ward into two polling districts and having a second polling station at a variety of different locations. Officers were minded not to recommend this proposal as the current polling station was already located centrally in the polling district.

Risbygate Ward consisted of two polling districts and two polling stations. The first proposal was to create a new polling district called Risbygate Part Three and move electors in Station Hill, part of Tayfen Road and Tayfen Terrace from Risbygate Part Two into this new area. The electors in this new area

would poll with those in Risbygate Part One at the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The current polling station in Risbygate Part Two (the Quaker Meeting House) was often required to hold two polling stations due to the number of electors and there had previously been concerns regarding access and parking. A further proposal was therefore to split Risbygate Part Two into two polling districts, creating a new polling district, Risbygate Part Four. The only cost implication would be room hire for an additional polling station. Officers recommended these proposals.

In considering both areas, members supported the proposals in respect of Risbygate Ward. In relation to St Olaves Ward, the Working Party noted that, while they recommended different solutions, both representations received had highlighted the need for two polling stations. Since at most elections the polling station at the Newbury Community Centre was split into two stations, with two sets of staff, members therefore felt that, as with Risbygate Ward, there would only be a small cost implication of splitting the polling district into two. Councillor Nettleton had suggested that the dividing line should follow the line of Northumberland Avenue, including properties on both sides of the road. He had previously had discussions with local residents and was confident that his proposal would receive their approval since it reflected a reasonable boundary between the Mildenhall Hall Road and Howard Estates. However, he offered to contact the two residents' associations before the matter was considered at full Council in December.

The Working Party noted that the new electoral register would be published in accordance with their recommendations pending ratification by full Council.

RECOMMENDED:-

That the Schedule of Polling Districts be amended to reflect the following changes:

- (1) Move electors from Station Hill, Tayfen Road (part of) and Tayfen Terrace from Risbygate Part Two to Risbygate Part One.**
- (2) Split Risbygate Part Two into two polling districts with the dividing line being Spring Lane and the Nature Reserve between Spring Lane and Beetons Way.**
- (3) Split St Olaves into two polling districts, with the dividing line to include all properties along Northumberland Avenue.**

8. Community Governance Review

(Councillor Farmer declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Bury St Edmunds Town Council during the consideration of this item.)

The Legal Services Manager introduced this report which sought to provide a comprehensive set of options regarding a Community Governance Review in

the borough. The last review had been conducted in 2010-2011 when minor changes had been made and there had been a proposal to create a new parish at Moreton Hall although this had not been taken further by the Working Party at the time.

Councillor Beckwith had submitted a Motion on Notice to the Council meeting on 30 June 2014 which had been referred for further consideration to this Working Party. Haverhill Town Council had also asked the council to look at parish boundaries in reference to growth in and around Haverhill under Vision 2031, and a number of requests had been received from parish councils affected by future growth.

This report asked the Working Party to recommend to Council that a review be undertaken, that a budget be allocated to conduct such a review, with the Working Party indicating their preferences for the method of consultation, and that an indicative timetable be approved.

Although the purpose of a review would be to consider the areas that had already put forward, there would be opportunity for interested parties to propose other areas for consideration. The Working Party would then consider all proposals and set the scope for the review.

Members of the Working Party considered a number of options for the method of consultation and unanimously agreed that the review should be web-based and widely publicised, with appropriate organisations and representatives being targeted for involvement, and parish and town councils being encouraged to publicise it to their own electors. Individual letters would not be sent to every household. Responses from electors would primarily be made online and collated electronically. However residents would be able to respond by post and communities would also to organise collective means of responding if they wished. It was clarified that, if an online survey was used, respondents would be asked to identify which parish or part of a town they currently lived in, so that top level (but anonymous) information could be provided to the Working Party on what proportion of residents in a certain area had responded and how.

In response to member questions, it was clarified that officer recommendation (d) was linked to the advice in paragraph 2.10.3 of the report which indicated that changes to parish arrangements could not be made in time for the 2015 elections and "*would be most likely to be brought in for the 2019 elections.*" However, the Legal Services Manager clarified that, while the normal practice was indeed to link implementation to the usual date of elections (on the four yearly cycle), the report should have made it clear that, under the regulations, there may also be scope for the Borough Council to consider whether there was justification for implementing changes at an earlier date, with a shorter than normal first period of office for any parish councillors elected under them (since elections would also then be needed in 2019 as well). This could incur the cost of stand-alone elections for the Borough Council where a new parish council was being created. Noting this clarification, the Working Party felt that this would be a matter that the Borough Council should address at a later stage of any review, when it was clearer what changes, if any, were required. Accordingly, it was felt that recommendation (d) was not relevant at the current time.

The Recommendations were taken separately:

Councillor Farmer moved the recommendation which was seconded and approved.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) The Council undertakes a Community Governance Review; and for that purpose:**
- a. Council confirms that initial consideration and targeted consultation with Borough Councillors, parish and town councils, the County Council, neighbouring councils, Members of Parliament and other community organisations (e.g. residents' associations) be undertaken to inform the preparation of Terms of Reference for the Review, taking into account the requests already received and the advice contained in Report COU/SE/14/001 about future growth areas.**

Councillor Mrs Levack moved the recommendation which was seconded and approved.

RECOMMENDED

- b. Council requests this Working Party to consider the outcome of that consultation and report back to Council at its scheduled meeting in June/July 2015.**

Councillor Chung moved the recommendation which was seconded and approved.

RECOMMENDED

- c. Council allocates a budget for the review (this sum to be determined and identified to full Council once the Working Party's preferences for consultation are known). Council agrees the review timetable set out in Appendix A of Report COU/SE/14/001 recognising that it will commence in 2015 and will not conclude before the May 2015 election.**

The Meeting concluded at 7.08 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
