

Minutes of the meeting of the **ELECTORAL MATTERS** Committee held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday 17 November 2011 at 5.30 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor S S Chandler

Councillors: G Cowan
P J Hawkins
K E Morris
F J W Scales

Officers: Democratic Services Manager
Team Leader – Electoral and Local Land Charges
Democratic Support Officer

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P A Watkins.

269 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor F J W Scales, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That Councillor S S Chandler be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

270 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was noted that in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules, Councillor K E Morris had been appointed substitute Member for Councillor P A Watkins.

271 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

272 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Democratic Services Manager advised the Committee that the terms of reference had been set by Council at its meeting on 28 September 2011 and not 28 November 2011 as incorrectly stated in the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the terms of reference be noted.

273 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report on the Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries. It was stated that the current review by the Boundary Commission for England would be completed by 2013 for the next parliamentary election in 2015.

The review resulted from the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and represented a substantial change from the previous reviews with the introduction of a fixed electoral quota of 76,641 electors from which no constituency was permitted to deviated by a range of more than plus or minus 5%. The current Dover constituency of 71,993 was below the minimum size of 72,810 which meant

that it could not remain unchanged. In addition, the reduction in the number of parliamentary constituencies in Kent from 25 to 24 and the creation of a constituency that crossed the border into East Sussex meant that all but one constituency in the county was subject to change.

Although the primary consideration of the Act was the electoral quota, the Boundary Commission for England would also give consideration to a lesser degree to geographical considerations and local ties, existing constituency boundaries, local government boundaries and the inconveniences attendant in such changes, so long as they did not deviate from the electoral quota.

The Committee was also advised that it should give consideration to whether the proposed constituency names were acceptable as these formed a part of the initial proposals under consultation, although any changes would need to be consistent with the naming convention laid down by the Boundary Commission for England.

The initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England would result in a Dover constituency of 80,283 electors, making it the largest in Kent. This was achieved by transferring two Shepway District Council wards (Elham & Stelling Minnis and North East Downs) from the current Folkestone and Hythe constituency to the Dover constituency and creating two 'orphan wards' by leaving Sandwich with the Margate and Ramsgate constituency (the majority of which was part of the South Thanet constituency) and moving Little Stour and Ashstone to the Herne Bay constituency.

Discussions took place on a proposal that sought to eliminate orphan wards. It was suggested that the Little Stour and Ashstone Ward be returned to the Margate and Ramsgate constituency as it had been previously part of the South Thanet constituency. In order to maintain the electoral quota it was proposed that the Salmestone ward be moved to the Herne Bay constituency thus eliminating orphan wards.

An alternative suggestion was that the Dover constituency be changed by including the Barham Downs ward currently in the Canterbury constituency and returning the two Shepway District Council wards to the Folkestone and Hythe constituency.

RESOLVED: Council is recommended to advise the Boundary Commission for England that:

- (a) It supports the Boundary Commission for England initial proposals in respect of the new Dover Constituency and request that the name of the Constituency to remain unchanged.
- (b) That the Boundary Commission for England be requested to consider the following amendments to the scheme on the grounds set out:
 - (i) Margate and Ramsgate constituency include the Dover Ward of Little Stour and Ashstone but exclude the Thanet Ward of Salmestone. It is further suggested that in order to properly reflect the community identity the Constituency be named East Thanet and Sandwich.

- (ii) Herne Bay Constituency include the Thanet Ward of Salmestone but exclude the Dover Ward of Little Stour and Ashstone.
- (iii) The proposed changes to the Boundary Commission for England initial proposals would:
 - (A) Ensure that the local ties between Little Stour and Ashstone and Sandwich would be maintained.
 - (B) It would prevent "orphan wards" being created in respect of Little Stour and Ashstone in Dover and Salmestone in Thanet.
 - (C) Maintain the existing boundary of the Constituency for Dover District Wards (currently in South Thanet).
 - (D) Prove administratively more effective in reducing the number of local authority areas covered by the Constituencies from three to two thus ensuring a stronger tie with the Member of Parliament.

274 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING STATIONS

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations to the Committee for its consideration. The Committee was informed that under the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, every Council in England and Wales was required to have undertaken and completed a review of all of its polling districts and polling places by 31 December 2007 and every four years thereafter.

The consultation received a number of responses, some of which could not be considered as they did not relate to matters that formed part of this review. They related purely to the selection of polling stations which were a matter for the Returning Officer to review and determine. The Returning Officers for the Dover constituency and the South Thanet constituency had responded to state that they were satisfied with the current scheme.

The Dover and Deal Labour Party raised three specific concerns about the Polling Districts in Buckland, North Deal and Eythorne & Shepherdsweil wards where it was felt that additional polling districts should be established to reduce travelling distances.

The consensus of opinion amongst the Committee was that the other polling districts were acceptable and required no alteration.

It was moved by Councillor S S Chandler and duly seconded

That Council is recommended to confirm that existing Polling District and Polling Place scheme be unchanged and designate the Polling Place as the existing Polling District and that the Chief Executive be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling

District as the Polling Place where necessary, subject to the officers being asked to submit to Council an alternative Polling District for BC1 (Buckland) with the effect of creating two Polling Districts.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor G Cowan and duly seconded

That Council is recommended to confirm that existing Polling District and Polling Place scheme be unchanged and designate the Polling Place as the existing Polling District and that the Chief Executive be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District as the Polling Place where necessary, subject to:

- (a) The officers being asked to submit an alternative Polling District for BC1 (Buckland) with the effect of creating two Polling Districts being submitted to Council;
- (b) The four former Polling Districts for North Deal be reinstated
- (c) The division of Polling District PEX1 into a Polling District for Elvington and a Polling District for Eythorne.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was LOST.

Whereupon the original proposal was put to the meeting and was CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That Council is recommended to confirm that existing Polling District and Polling Place scheme be unchanged and designate the Polling Place as the existing Polling District and that the Chief Executive be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District as the Polling Place where necessary, subject to the officers being asked to submit to Council an alternative Polling District for BC1 (Buckland) with the effect of creating two Polling Districts.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm.