

Ms Edwina Grant
Interim Chief Executive
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Chicksands
Shefford SG17 5TQ

2 October 2009

Dear Ms Grant

Central Bedfordshire Council Size

At its meeting earlier this week, the Committee considered your Council's proposal for a council size of 66 members and I am writing to you to let you know the outcome of that discussion.

The Committee has asked me to pass on their appreciation for the work that has gone into the submission over the summer which has helped them understand the Council's aspirations for Central Bedfordshire's management and representational structure. However, it was decided to defer their decision until their next meeting, on 20 October.

In particular, the Committee was unclear about some elements of the analysis that led to the figure of 66, notably that relating to the argument of 'discounting' members of the Development Management Committee from more than one additional committee member role, as stated in paragraph 4.5 of your submission.

The Committee has three main concerns in relation to this:

- First, little, if any, account appears to have been given to the impact of the Planning Act 2008 on the workload of the Development Management Committee. Given the legislation provides for a 'fast-track' approach to planning applications, the workload of the Development Management Committee should, in the Committee's view, be lower than the assumptions made by the Council.

The Boundary Committee
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

Tel 020 7271 0500
Fax 020 7271 0505
Textphone 18001 020 7271 0500
info@boundarycommittee.org.uk
www.boundarycommittee.org.uk

- Second, planning applications nationwide are down by approximately 20%. If mirrored in Central Bedfordshire, this nationwide reduction will have the effect of further reducing the workload of the Development Management Committee.
- Finally, the Committee also notes that the workload of this Committee, as referred to in paragraph 3.20 of your submission, is not necessarily consistent with current practice in other unitary authorities.

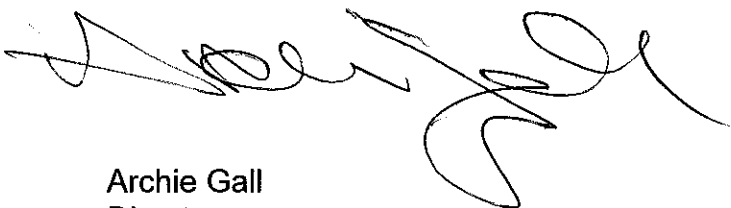
Accordingly, the Committee questions why it is considered Development Management Committee members cannot undertake more than one additional Committee membership role. If this were the case then the Committee, using the other evidence in the Council's submission, might incline to a slightly smaller size for the Council, i.e. under 60 members.

The Committee is anxious that its decision is as informed as possible and, before taking a final decision on council size, Max Caller, Chair of the Boundary Committee, and Professor Colin Mellors would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, Councillor Turner, Councillor Rawcliffe and the officers working on the electoral review, to discuss the concerns outlined above. Arion Lawrence, Review Officer, is liaising with your officers to arrange this meeting.

The meeting will enable a fuller discussion about the matter and it would be helpful if you could give further thought to this aspect of the submission in advance of that meeting.

Should you have any queries relating to the Committee's consideration of council size for Central Bedfordshire, please contact Arion Lawrence on alawrence@boundarycommittee.org.uk or 020 7271 0674.

Yours sincerely



Archie Gall
Director
020 7271 0650
agall@boundarycommittee.org.uk