

Principal Councils' submissions to the "Striking the Right Balance" and "On The Right Lines" Consultations

This PDF document contains submissions from the principal councils A - C in the consultation.

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amber-valley-borough-council-consultation-response-2010-12-20



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colchester-borough-co...



cumbria-county-counc...



Cambridge-City-Council-consultation-response-2010-12-20

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 14:54
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Amber Valley Borough Council
Attachments: Response to LGBC consultation Dec 2010.doc

David Owen Policy & Research Officer

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From: Hardwick, Pat [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 December 2010 10:46
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Consultation - Policy and Procedures - Electoral and Principal Area Boundary Reviews

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the above consultation and attach a letter setting out the response of the Council.

Kind regards

Pat

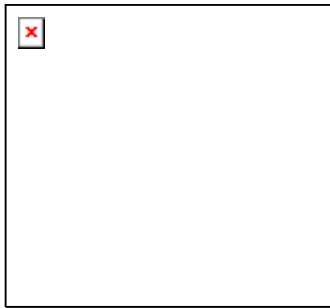
Pat Hardwick | Democratic Services Officer (Elections)

Amber Valley Borough Council
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Making a Difference for Amber Valley

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Ref : PH
Your Ref :
Date : 20 December 2010

(Sent by email:
futures@lgbce.org.uk)

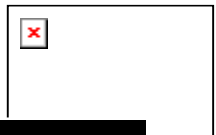
Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation Documents - Boundary and Electoral Reviews

I refer to your consultation papers on the policy and procedures in relation to Principal Area Boundary Reviews and Electoral Reviews and set out below the response on behalf of the Council:

Electoral Reviews:

- 1 Do you think that setting out principles by which electoral reviews are conducted is helpful? *Yes*
- 2 Are the principles set out appropriate and adequate? If not, what other principles should be adopted? *Yes but insufficient emphasis is given to the importance of local choice. Provision should be made to set out the cost of undertaking and implementing reviews.*
- 3 Is the classification of types of review set out appropriate and adequate? *Yes*
- 4 Is a criteria-based approach to determining council size desirable? *This is useful as a guide but does not detail the rights of citizens to access and influence and challenge decision making.*
- 5 Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate? If not, what other elements should be included? *See comment at 4 above.*
- 6 Are the stages of the reviews (as set out in Appendix 1 to this report) clear and appropriate? *Yes but the timetable to complete Type C reviews involving a change in size is too long.*
- 7 Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful? *Yes*
- 8 Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings? *See comment at 6 above.*



- 9 Should LGBC shift the emphasis to maximisation of equality in five years' time? *In the current financial climate, any forecasts will need to reflect local economic activity.*
- 10 How should the LGBC decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage it to recommend short-term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five years' time? *See comment at 9 above.*

Principal Area Boundary Reviews:

- 1 Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate? *Yes*
- 2 Under what circumstances should 'compound*' reviews be carried out? (*a large-scale review or merger, providing an opportunity to address other boundary anomalies with adjacent areas). *Preferably where there is agreement.*
- 3 Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria? *Yes. The inclusion of other criteria (local support and value for money) is sensible.*
- 4 Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria? *Yes*
- 5 Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved? *Yes provided any change takes place promptly.*
- 6 Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate? *Yes.*
- 7 Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable? *The stepped approach seems sensible in justifying change.*
- 8 Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable? *Yes. It is important that boundary reviews deal with matters comprehensively as a single package and not in a piecemeal manner.*
- 9 How much notice of the Commission's intention to undertake a review would be necessary in order to give councils sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries? *Six months.*
- 10 Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts? *A checklist of issues requiring attention under a review would be essential so that no issues are overlooked.*

Yours sincerely

John Grady

Assistant Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 14:50
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Aylesbury Vale DC
Attachments: Boundary reviews - consultation response Dec 10.doc; Electoral reviews - consultation response Dec 10.doc

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From: White, Les [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 December 2010 11:23
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Consultation on principal area boundary and electoral reviews

Attached are our responses to these consultation papers.

Leslie White
Head of Administration
AVDC
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[REDACTED]

--

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AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Administration



Our Ref:
Your Ref:

16th December 2010



The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
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Dear Sirs

Principal area boundary reviews – Consultation response

Question 1 – The classification to inform the approach to reviews is sensible.

We agree that care needs to be taken in accommodating compound reviews. This needs to be considered as part of the initial assessment and all affected authorities need to be in agreement in line with the sentiments in paragraph 31 of the paper.

Question 2 – The key criteria proposed are appropriate and it should be possible to assemble evidence in support of a case for change. Whilst we accept that changes dealt with under type A reviews are unlikely to have significant financial implications we feel that if there is a value for money argument that is relevant then this should be submitted as part of the evidence. There could be for example efficiency savings where a small hamlet or cul-de-sac is currently split and served by different councils.

Question 3 – Setting out the initiation process for each type of review is helpful in providing a good understanding of the different stages and of what councils need to do. We welcome in particular the intention to limit the resultant changes to electoral arrangements to the minimum with type A and B reviews. It would in our view be sensible to provide some flexibility for a type B review to lead to a small change in council size if an obvious solution with minimal disruption was to create a new ward for the area that was being transferred.

Question 4 - We agree that it is important to assess local support for any change. It would be beneficial and prudent to encourage councils to discuss proposals with the Commission before rather than at the time of formally requesting a review to ensure that work at this stage fits with the assessment in paragraph 31

Question 5 – The assurance requirements are clear and reasonable.

Question 6 - The approach to electoral arrangements is clear and reasonable.



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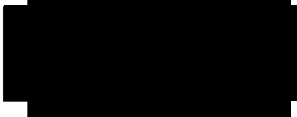
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Question 7 – We are particularly concerned that adequate notice is given where the Commission initiates reviews. In the case of type A and B reviews a minimum of three months notice would be appreciated. Having regard to the scale of type C and D reviews which will look at the council area as a whole then a minimum notice of six months would be needed of the intention to start a review. This would allow in particular for the work to be properly resourced and planned, possible changes identified, consultation with other councils affected and evidence to be gained of local support. This does not seem unreasonable as the Commission itself will no doubt need to provide for the review in it's overall work programme.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Leslie White.

Leslie White
Head of Administration

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AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Administration



Our Ref:
Your Ref:

16th December 2010



The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
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Dear Sirs

Electoral reviews – Consultation response

Question 1 – We agree that it is helpful to set out the principles by which reviews are conducted. However with respect to improving electoral equality we question the desirability of giving greater weight to the reflection of the known rather than the anticipated distribution of electors in putting in place sensible arrangements which can apply for longer than just the next election.

The “triage” approach with greater dialogue to inform the scale of any review is welcomed.

Question 2 – The classification to inform the approach to reviews is welcomed.

Question 3 – The criteria based approach and the elements are appropriate for determining council size. Another consideration could be the physical size of the area bearing in mind the difference in the geographical spread of electors between urban and rural authorities. It is important that the five year forecast of electorates is available at the outset to enable proper conclusions to be drawn as to the correct size.

Question 4 - It is essential that there continues to be an opportunity for locally devolved warding arrangements to be put forward to inform development of the Commission’s draft recommendations. This needs to be made explicit in the new arrangements.

It is also highly desirable that the Commission gives as much advance notice as possible ahead of the preliminary stage where it requires a review. This will enable councils to plan and prepare properly to contribute to the review and to consider in particular electorate projections.

We do not feel that there is a good reason to depart from the Governments normal requirement of allowing 12 weeks for any consultation especially bearing in mind the problems that might arise in obtaining informed comment at particular times of the year.

Question 5 – Forecasts are by their nature the best estimate at any particular time and to



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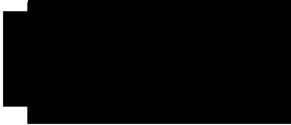
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suggest that there can be certainty looking forward 5 years is unrealistic. We have concerns about the shift of emphasis as mentioned in the response to question 1 and it is clear from the paper that forecasts have proved to be reasonably good. The Commission could require supporting information to be provided to substantiate forecasts where these are significantly different to the current electorate and take a view on this on a case by case basis.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Leslie White.

Leslie White
Head of Administration

—

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:05
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: consultation FW: Babergh DC/Mid Suffolk DC
Attachments: LGBCE Consultation Response.doc

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From: Betchley, Amanda [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Rockall, Pat
Sent: 21 December 2010 16:51
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Response to two consultation documents "On the Right Lines?" and "Striking the Right Balance"

<<LGBCE Consultation Response.doc>>

Pat Rockall
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Andrew Good
Chief Executive
Mid Suffolk District Council
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
Your reference:
Our reference:
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
PR/APG/ajb
[REDACTED]

21 December 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the two consultation documents "On the Right Lines?" and "Striking the Right Balance".

Subject to the outcome of a local poll, our two Councils will be seeking a PABR in 2011 with a view to the creation of a single new District Council for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk areas from April 2013.

You will, therefore, appreciate our direct shared interest in these consultation documents. In these circumstances, we have agreed a joint response to these documents, as attached to this letter.

We hope that these comments are clear and helpful. If, however, you would find further discussion on any of the points raised helpful, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

Pat Rockall Andrew
Chief Executive Chief
Babergh District Council

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**PRINCIPAL AREA BOUNDARY REVIEWS
LGBCE CONSULTATION: ON THE RIGHT LINES?**

1a Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful?

Yes

Is the proposed classification appropriate?

Yes, but it is necessary to avoid confusion between this classification and that used for electoral reviews.

1b Under what circumstances should “compound” reviews be carried out?

Whenever, *but only where*, it can be mutually agreed by all affected parties that this would be a timely and helpful approach. A review that might otherwise enjoy local support should not be jeopardised by the addition of unwelcome peripheral issues affecting, for example, the boundary with a neighbouring authority not included in the original request for review. The proposal that there would not be an extension to the scope of a review without the agreement of the initial proposers of the review is therefore warmly welcomed.

2a Are the review criteria relevant?

Yes

And/or should there be other criteria?

No

2b Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

Yes in principle, but close engagement with the LGBCE prior to the formal request for a review would be very helpful in ensuring that the evidence being assembled was indeed of a type and level of detail that the LGBCE would accept as being appropriate and sufficient.

3 Is the initiation process clear and reasonable?

Yes

If not, how could it be improved?

N/A

4 Is the Commission’s approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

Yes, but the proposed approach is not without potential problems. On the face of it, if the poll is itself not to be considered as binding, it could call into question the value of this method of testing the level of public support compared with other methods of demonstrating public opinion.

As indicated in paragraph 40 of the consultation document, the “ground rules” for the local poll must be clearly and transparently stated before the poll is held. In particular, if the outcome of the poll is not considered to be absolutely binding, there would need to be real clarity and credibility in the relative weight given to the local poll outcome compared with other evidence of public and stakeholder opinion, and also relative to the weight attached to other criteria.

5 Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?


Yes, subject to full account being taken of all savings accrued (e.g on staffing integration) prior to the formal creation of a single council.

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6 Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Broadly yes, although there could be improvements in the "read across" between this consultation document and the parallel consultation document on electoral reviews.

Firstly, a clearer link in this document to the electoral review consultation document would be helpful in relation to the criteria for determining council size as a precursor to electoral review.

Secondly, it is not particularly helpful or clear to refer to Type A – D reviews in this consultation document and Type A – C reviews in the electoral review consultation document. For example, the proposed BDC/MSDC review, which we understand would be undertaken as a combined boundary and electoral review, is classified as a Type D boundary review but a Type C electoral review. This will not be conducive to public transparency or ease of explanation to interested stakeholders if our planned combined review goes forward.

In terms of the stages of a review, it would be helpful if one or the other of the consultation documents provided a table showing the overall timetable and key milestones for a combined Type D boundary review and Type C electoral review, indicating where the overlaps between the boundary and electoral elements of the combined review would arise.

7 How much notice of a review would be necessary if councils are to have sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impacts of a change to their boundaries?

Where reviews are instigated by LAs themselves, they will presumably request that the review start no earlier than they have the capacity to manage. Thus, timing is unlikely to be an issue in these reviews.

For any imposed review, much will probably depend on the views of the local authority as to whether this is a welcome intervention. If it is not seen as a priority, then considerable notice may be needed whilst the LA considers how resources might be realigned from priority areas to undertake such a review. In these circumstances, the preparation time will need to be determined in discussions on an individual basis, taking account of the nature and scale of review.

8 Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

No

ADDITIONAL RESPONSE

The proposed target date of April 2011 for the publication of guidance will be too late for BDC/MSDC. We will therefore need regular dialogue with the LGBCE in the first quarter of the year to ensure that we are likely to comply with the intended guidance.

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**ELECTORAL REVIEWS
LGBCE CONSULTATION: STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE**

1a Do you think that setting out principles by which electoral reviews are to be conducted is helpful?

Yes

1b Are the principles set out above appropriate and adequate?

Yes

If not, what other principles should be adopted?

N/A

2 Is the classification of types of review set out appropriate and adequate?

As a stand-alone description of electoral reviews, this classification may be adequate. However, the “read-across” to the parallel consultation document “On the right lines?” regarding principal area boundary reviews (PABR) could be clearer.

It is not particularly helpful or clear to refer to Type A – D reviews in the PABR consultation document and Type A – C reviews in this document. For example, the proposed BDC/MSDC review, which we understand would be undertaken as a combined boundary and electoral review, is classified as a Type D boundary review but a Type C electoral review. This will not be conducive to public transparency or ease of explanation to interested stakeholders if our planned combined review goes forward.

3a Is a criteria based approach to determining council size desirable?

Yes, provided the suggested criteria for determining council size are judged alongside the stated principles set out in Section 3 (page 5) e.g. increasing localism, improved effectiveness and no pre-determined outcome to the review.

3b Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate?

Appropriate in their own right but not fully adequate for Type C electoral reviews (Types C and D boundary reviews).

If not, what other elements should be included?

Again, a clearer “read across” to the PABR consultation document would be helpful. All of the criteria set out in that document, including value for money, should apply to the determination of council size. The characteristics of an area, such as its rurality or urban nature; its infrastructure and factors such as the number of parish councils may also need to be taken into account.

4a Are the stages of the reviews as shown in Figure 1 clear and appropriate?

Broadly clear in their own right, but again the “read-across” to the PABR consultation could be clearer.

For example, whereas it appears from this document that there will be a separate 4 week period of open consultation on council size in a Type C electoral review, the PABR document makes no similar reference for a Type C or D review.


Moreover, whereas in the PABR document it appears that LAs will be invited to propose consequential electoral arrangements, it does not appear from this

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document to be the case for an electoral review. Indeed, paras 42 – 43 explicitly suggest that this provision will be removed with the dispensing of the current formal Stage 1 consultation, being replaced with a vaguer opportunity to provide further information about areas and communities in an “information gathering” period.

It would therefore be helpful for a table in both consultation documents to show the overall timetable and key milestones for a combined Type D PABR and Type C electoral review, indicating the stages and overlaps between the boundary and electoral elements of the combined review.

4b Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful?

Strongly agree, provided the timetable is clear well in advance, so that councils and stakeholders alike can plan for their input at the appropriate stages. The proposed timetable seems to strike the right balance between ensuring that a review can progress within a reasonable timescale without compromising the necessary degree of public involvement and scrutiny.

4c Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings?

Yes, subject to the advance notice of timetable, as referred in at 4b above.

5a Should LGBCE shift the emphasis to maximising electoral equality at the first election to follow a review from the maximisation of equality in five years' time?

Yes in the current uncertain economic climate, provided there is a reasonably responsive review regime to pick up type A or B electoral reviews where these might then be needed in five or more years.

5b How should we decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage us to recommend short-term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five years' time?

The best way of establishing whether forecasts are reliable would be to devise a standard methodology specifying what has to be taken into consideration in relation to these forecasts. This could involve, for instance, a study of planning policies, records of actual planning consents and estimates of the level of occupation of dwellings for which such consents existed, all in accordance with the uniformly applied system.


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Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 16:01
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Attachments: Consultation Paper- On the right lines - LGBC.doc

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Policy & Research Officer

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From: Paula Chatterton [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 January 2011 11:48
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Consultation Paper- On the right lines - LGBC

Please find attached the response from myself as an officer at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

Apologies, missed the deadline as in the consultation paper but thought you might still like it.

Regards
Paula

Paula Chatterton
Democratic Services Manager
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

[REDACTED]
[website: www.basingstoke.gov.uk](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk)

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28/01/2011

On the Right lines? – A Consultation on Policy and Procedures for Principal Area Boundary Reviews

**RESPONSE FROM DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
AT BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Q1a. Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

Q1b. Under what circumstances should ‘compound’ reviews be carried out?

I think that the proposed classification is both helpful and appropriate and covers all types of review that might arise. In terms of compound reviews, I do not believe that review should be conducted involving a further council area unless all parties to be involved (i.e. including the council that did not make or was not part of the initial proposal) are in agreement. Such an approach should help to avoid unnecessary objections and delays to the original purpose of the review..

Q2a. Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

Q2b. Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of criteria?

The review criteria set out in the consultation paper are relevant. I do not think it would be difficult to provide the evidence required in terms of the criteria assuming always that the proposed change had merit in the first place. If this assumption is not met, then the demerits of the case will become clear at an early stage.

Q3. Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?

The process for all four types of reviews seems both clear and reasonable.

Q4. Is the Commission’s approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

I have no difficulty with the approach but would like to raise an important point with regards to one of the steps within the process. There are several references to a local advisory poll being carried out. However, the consultation paper is silent on the process to be followed in holding such a poll. If such polls are to become a regular feature of carrying out a review, it would seem appropriate that a standard set of rules is produced which could be used by local authorities in conducting such polls. It would be ideal if the rules had a statutory basis.

Q5. Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

The suggested approach seems sensible and reasonable.

Q6. Is the Commission’s overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Yes.

Q7. How much notice of a review would be necessary if councils are to have sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

At least six months notice.

Q8. Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

The list of prompts seems both appropriate and comprehensive.

Paula Chatterton
Democratic Services Manager
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

January 2011

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 16:01
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Attachments: Consultation Paper- Striking the right balance - LGBC.doc

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From: Paula Chatterton [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 January 2011 11:51
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Consultation Paper- Striking the right balance - LGBC

Hi

Please find attached my response as an officer from Basingstoke and Deane on the attached consultation.

I realise it is late but thought you might like it anyway.

Kind Regards
Paula

Paula Chatterton
Democratic Services Manager
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
[REDACTED]

website: www.basingstoke.gov.uk

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**Striking the Right Balance – A Consultation on Policy and Procedures for
Electoral Reviews**

**RESPONSE FROM DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
AT BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Q1a. Do you think that setting out principles by which electoral reviews are conducted is helpful?

Q1b. Are the principles set out above appropriate and adequate? If not, what other principles should be adopted?

I am of the view that the principles adopted and published by the LGBCE should be more than helpful – they need to be seen as essential to the approach and conduct of all reviews, particularly in relation to the LGBCE itself and to the local authorities concerned. All parties' concerned need to have a clear understanding of those principles and the way in which they will be followed and used. Such an approach leads to consistency on a national basis and the most efficient and effective use of resources in dealing with reviews.

The principles set out in the consultation paper seem both appropriate and adequate.

Q2. Is the classification of types of review set out appropriate and adequate?

The three types of review set out in the consultation paper appear both logical and sensible.

Q3a. Is a criteria based approach to determining council-size desirable?

Q3b. Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate? If not, what other elements should be included?

Both the approach and elements are appropriate. A system based on the elements set out in paragraph 40 should be prepared to ensure that local authorities properly address these elements in making any propositions for change of council size.

Q4a. Are the stages of the reviews as shown in Figure 1 clear and appropriate?

Q4b. Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful?

Q4c. Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings?

The stages of the various types of review set out in Figure 1 are clear and seem appropriate. Having different timescales in terms of the potential complexity of the type of review is sensible and appropriate. I agreed that the timescales for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions.

Q5a. Should LGBCE shift the emphasis to maximising electoral equality at the first election to follow a review from the maximisations of equality in five year's time?

Q5b. How should we decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage us to recommend short-term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five year's time?

I believe that the approach outlined in paragraph 47 should be the one adopted and used in future reviews by LGBCE. It provides greater electoral equality on a known and given situation and therefore follows more closely the general principle of the weight of each vote being equal. Development forecasts should only be used where there is certainty that a development will commence within the period in question. That certainty can only properly be demonstrated by detailed planning applications, commencement of ground works, completed planning agreements etc. If matters are still at outline or proposal stage, the forecasts should not be used. Where there are significant changes brought about by developments not included in forecasts from previous reviews, they can be accommodated by the more streamlined system for future Type A reviews at such time as the criteria outlined in paragraph 21 comes into effect in a particular local authority's area.

Paula Chatterton
Democratic Services Manager
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

January 2011

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:19
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: consultation FW:Brighton & Hove City Council
Attachments: Response to consultation on PABRs - final (23.12.10).doc

David Owen
Policy & Research Officer

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From: Oliver Dixon [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 December 2010 15:55
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Response to PABR consultation

Please find attached the response from Brighton & Hove City Council to LGBCE's consultation on the policy and procedures for principal area boundary reviews.

Oliver Dixon
Acting Senior Lawyer
Corporate Law Team
Brighton & Hove City Council
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**Brighton & Hove City Council Response to Consultation on
Policy and Procedures for Principal Area Boundary Reviews (PABRs)**

Q1a: Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

Given that the scope of a PABR can vary so widely, from a small scale alteration of a boundary line to a full-blown merger between local authorities, it seems sensible to adopt a tiered approach as proposed.

As to whether the classification is appropriate, the difference in scope between Type B and Type C is considerable. Specifically, Type B would apply where a review “would not have ANY [*emphasis added*] material impact on the management of service delivery”, whilst the next category up, Type C, applies where a review “would have a significant impact on the management of services.” It may be difficult to classify a review where the outcome would have some but not a significant effect on how services are managed.

Q1b: Under what circumstances should compound reviews be carried out?

We agree that compound reviews should only proceed with the consent of the initial proposers of the review, to ensure that resolving their issue is not unfairly delayed or otherwise prejudiced by complications relating to an associated review elsewhere.

Q2a: Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

Under the heading ‘Other Criteria’, we suggest that the following criteria might also be relevant:

(i) whether a council requesting a review could show that the perceived benefits of altering the boundary in question significantly outweighed any perceived adverse consequences.

(ii) the extent to which the request was consistent with the Sustainable Community Strategy (or Strategies)¹ for the areas concerned.

Q2b: Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

By consulting with local representative groups and other councils affected by a review, we believe that local authorities could demonstrate how the key criteria were achieved. However, it would be helpful to know if the Commission has any particular considerations in mind with regard to ‘effective

¹ As defined in section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 2000

and convenient local government' and 'community identity and interests', as these criteria are potentially very broad and there is no accepted definition as to what they comprise.

Q3: Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?

Yes, with one qualification. We suggest that where, under 'Typical process', LGBCE meets with councils affected, the Commission has discretion to include other interested parties. This would be relevant where, for example, a residents' association were the instigators of a council's request for a review; in this instance it would be inappropriate to exclude the association from the initial meeting.

Q4: Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

Yes, and in particular we support the need, as referenced in paragraph 38, to consult with local (e.g. town) councils, as their viability might be at risk in consequence of the review.

Q5: Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

Yes, although the local authority whose geographical area was to increase, following Sec of State approval of the Commission's recommendation to change the boundary, would itself require an assurance that:

- (i) the central government grant payable to the local authority in consequence of the larger area would increase accordingly; and
- (ii) the council tax receipts from the new area were sufficient to cover those aspects of their local authority budget dependent on that revenue stream.

Q6: Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Yes. In some cases it is likely that residents affected by a boundary change will have concerns about the consequences for small electoral units in the vicinity. For example, a boundary change may call into question the viability of a parish council or town council if the new boundary significantly reduces the population of those administrative areas. This can create tensions among the residents concerned, for whilst they might want the anomalous boundary re-drawn, at the same time they might wish to preserve the existence of their local parish or town council.

In view of this, we welcome the Commission's intention that for all reviews larger in scale than Type A, they would consider the local authorities' proposals for dealing with the electoral consequences of a boundary change, and would consult on the consequential electoral arrangements as part of their PABR recommendations.

Q7: How much notice of a review would be necessary if councils are to have sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

We take this question as referring to those reviews which are undertaken at the Commission's own initiative. We consider that six months would constitute reasonable notice, as this would afford councils sufficient time to prepare, conduct and analyse responses to a local survey ascertaining the views of residents and communities.

Q8: Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

Under 'Support for the proposed change', the prompt should include a check on whether the PABR has the support of potentially affected local authorities. This cross-refers to para 26.

The first two paragraphs under 'Reflecting community identity' are more about consequential electoral arrangements than community identity. We suggest these paragraphs are referred to more accurately.

As indicated in our response to Q2b above, the expression 'community identity' is not defined. For the purposes of providing evidence in support of a PABR, it would be helpful to receive further guidance as to the forms of evidence that might indicate the existence of a discrete community.

Response prepared by:

*Oliver Dixon
Acting Senior Lawyer
Legal & Democratic Services
Brighton & Hove City Council*



23 December 2010

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:26
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: consultation FW:Burnley Council
Attachments: Burnley response boundary commission submission.doc

David Owen Policy & Research Officer

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From: Rob Dobson [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 December 2010 11:03
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Burnley Council: consultation response

On behalf of Burnley Borough Council, I am pleased to attached a response to "[On the right lines? A consultation on policy and procedures for Principal Area Boundary Reviews.](#)"
Thank you.

.....
Rob Dobson
Corporate Policy Officer

[REDACTED]
<http://www.feedbackonline.org.uk>

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Response to "On the right lines? A consultation on policy and procedures for Principal Area Boundary Reviews."

Question 1a

Do you think that classifying Principle Area Boundary Review's is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

Yes, however we would encourage LGBCE not to plan for a set number of review types per year. Each review should be taken on merit, based on the potential benefit in terms of convenient and effective local government even if that means only being able to conduct a small number of type D reviews each year. We therefore do not support the assertion that "Substantial changes to the boundaries between two-tier county council areas can have a major impact on service delivery and the electoral arrangements for all county and district councils involved. For this reason, we are unlikely in the near future to undertake a review of other than minor boundary anomalies."

Question 1b

Under what circumstances should 'compound' reviews be carried out?

Individual circumstances will dictate. We agree with the approach to compound reviews outlined in the consultation document.

Question 2a

Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

Yes the criteria are relevant.

Question 2b

Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

Yes, however in two tier areas in particular, disagreement over the necessity for a review may mean there is reluctance to share information which may be pertinent to the business case for change. While authorities can make use of the Freedom of Information Act, it may be appropriate for the LGBCE to require local authorities to cooperate with each other.

Question 3

Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?

Yes we agree with the proposed initiation process.

Question 4

Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

Yes, however we are not convinced that it is reasonable to demand that a local authority conduct a poll in order to demonstrate local support for a Type D merger. A survey of a sample of the population, conducted in a methodologically robust way (possibly by an independent researcher) would be far more cost effective, and have statistical validity.

Question 5

Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

Yes, we agree that the assurance required is clear and reasonable.

Question 6

Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Yes, we agree that the approach is clear and reasonable.

Question 7

How much notice of the Commission's intention to undertake a review would be necessary in order to give councils sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

It depends on the type of review being undertaken, and other factors such as the number of reviews the Commission has under consideration. We suggest that timescales are agreed between the authority and the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

Question 8

Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

We find the prompts helpful and support the Commission's approach not to burden the process with overly prescriptive requirements.

Other comments:

The 2007 Act places constraints on the recommendations available to LGBCE. LGBCE cannot make a recommendation which would lead to:

1. alteration of a boundary of a single tier area which will result in the abolition of a two-tier area;
2. alteration of a two-tier area which will result in the abolition of a single tier area
3. the constitution of a new local government area and resultant abolition of an existing local government area where the new area includes a combination of the whole or part of a single tier area and the whole or part of a two-tier area;
4. the alteration of a local government area or creation of a new local government area that would extend into an area that is currently outside all local government areas. This means that the recommendation for boundary change may not extend an area into Wales, the City of London or the Temples.
5. the alteration of any local government area that results in a change to the overall pattern of local government in England. Proposals must ensure the existing pattern, comprising wholly of counties divided into districts, counties comprising one district or London boroughs, is retained (with the exception of the Isles of Scilly, the City of London, the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple which do not reflect this pattern).

Burnley Council's policy is that a merger with neighbouring district Pendle to form a new unitary council would result in more efficient and effective local government. Numbers 1, 2, and 3 and 4 above are irrelevant to a Burnley and Pendle merger. Number 5 is relevant, but it is debatable as to whether a Burnley and Pendle merger into a single tier affects the existing pattern, given the single tiers of Blackburn and Blackpool within Lancashire. Our policy also entails the continuation of the two-tiers in the rest of the county administrative area. Clarification in the guidance would be beneficial.

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:25
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Carlisle City Council
Attachments: LGBCE Exec Response Dec10.docx

David Owen
Policy & Research Officer

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From: Jason Gooding [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 December 2010 10:19
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: Response to On The Right Lines? and Striking The Right Balance

Dear Sir/Madam

At a meeting on 22 December 2009 the Executive of Carlisle City Council resolved to send the attached response to the above consultations that are currently underway. In general the proposals are very warmly welcomed.

The members of the Executive are very keen to explore the opportunities afforded by your proposals and I wonder if it might be possible to arrange an informal discussion between members of the Executive and a representative on the LGBCE? I'd be very grateful if you could point me in the right direction to speak to someone about this early in the new year.

Merry Christmas!

Jason Gooding
Deputy Chief Executive
Carlisle City Council
 [REDACTED]

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RESPONSE FROM CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

ON THE RIGHT LINES

Question 1a

Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

Yes and the classifications seem to be appropriate.

Question 1b

Under what circumstances should 'compound' reviews be carried out?

It would be particularly important to in our view to consider compound reviews when the merger of two or more district councils in a county is proposed. It may desirable to conduct a compound review in the interests of a consistent pattern of local government across a sub-region.

Question2a

Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

The criteria are suitable and we are pleased to note the importance given to local support and community identities and interests.

Question 2b

Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

Yes – similar work has been undertaken by local authorities during the recent round of unitary reviews. It will be helpful to do this in dialogue with the commission rather than submitting a competitive bid.

Question 3

Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?

The process seems clear and we appreciate the proportionality of application, which should ensure that reviews are processed in a timely fashion.

Question 4

Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

Yes – again the principal of proportionality depending on the type of review is welcomed. It will be important to be clear about the ground rules for authorities 'campaigning' for a particular view. – there is an obvious link here with the provisions of the localism bill.

Question 5

Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

The principal of proportionality works well here also.

Question 6

Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Yes, and it links clearly with the proposals in "Striking the Right Balance".

Question 7

How much notice of the Commission's intention to undertake a review would be necessary in order to give councils sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

If the initiative is coming from outside the authority, then we would need at least one year's notice of a review from "cold". Clearly if the initiative was coming from within the authority (i.e. the review was clearly desired by the authority) then timescales could be shorter as much of the preparatory work could be done before approaching the Commission.

Question 8

Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

We accept and appreciate that the business of PABRs is primarily about electors. However the issues around community identity and effective & convenient local government are relevant to service users who are not necessarily electors (for example visitors and businesses). We would like to see more explicit consideration of how these stakeholders might be engaged.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Question 1a

Do you think that setting out principles by which electoral reviews are conducted is helpful?

Yes.

Question 1b

Are the principles set out appropriate and adequate? If not, what other principles should be adopted?

Yes and, similarly to "On the Right Lines?" we support the principle of a proportionate approach.

Question 2

Is the classification of types of review set out appropriate and adequate?

Yes. Moreover the links with the PABR review types seem clear and appropriate.

Question 3a

Is a criteria-based approach to determining council-size desirable?

Yes it is. Although we appreciate the reasoning for not adopting a strictly mathematical approach – we feel there should be strong and clear justification for deviating from numerical "norms" in terms of the number of electors per representative.

Question 3b

Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate? If not, what other elements should be included?

The elements set out are clearly relevant – however if, for example, the current decision making framework of an authority currently requires many members, that should not naturally translate into a future requirement for a relatively large number of members. Form should follow the required function, with clear consideration of efficiency.

Question 4a

Are the stages of the reviews as shown in Figure 2 clear and appropriate?

Yes.

Question 4b

Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful?

Yes. It is important that reviews are conducted in a timely manner as there is likely to be a high degree of interest in PABRs, resulting in a substantial programme of work.

Question 4c

Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings?

Yes. The importance of a PABR would lend itself to convening special meetings if necessary, but the indicated timescales would fit with the current arrangements in Carlisle.

Question 5a

Should LGBCE shift the emphasis to maximising electoral equality at the first election to follow a review from the maximisation of equality in five years' time?

This seems sensible as long as the consideration of demographic change that has a high degree of certainty is utilised as indicated. It may be helpful to more clearly define the degree of certainty required.

Question 5b

How should we decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage us to recommend short-term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five years' time?

By clearly communicating the options (and the supporting evidence) to facilitate an inclusive consultation on the issue. Electors will need to understand, and hopefully support, the reason for a short-term imbalance. At the conclusion of a comprehensive consultation the Commission should be in the best position to make informed choices. The last resort would be a future "type A" review to address the subsequent imbalance – much of the supporting work would have been already completed so this may only take around 16 weeks.

Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:05
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: consultation FW:Colchester Borough Council
Attachments: LGBCE electoral reviews 22-12-10.pdf; LGBCE PAB reviews 22-12-10.pdf

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From: Amanda Chidgey [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 December 2010 10:23
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Subject: LGBCE consultations

Dear Sir / Madam,
Please find attached the responses from Colchester Borough Council in respect of the consultation papers:

- On the right lines? a consultation on policy and procedures for principal area boundary reviews
- Striking the right balance - a consultation on policy and procedures for electoral reviews

Yours faithfully

Amanda Chidgey
Democratic Services Manager
Colchester Borough Council
33 Sheepen Road
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CO3 3WG
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[REDACTED]

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3b) Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate? If not, what other elements should be included?

It is considered that more information needs to be provided in relation to measurement of the criteria. It is not therefore currently possible to make a judgement regarding their appropriateness or adequacy.

4a) Are the stages of the reviews as shown in Figure 1 clear and appropriate?

The stages for each review are considered clear and appropriate

4b) Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful?

The paper specifically refers to the potential to reduce consultation periods for the draft recommendation stage. This goal is supported and a reduction to 6 weeks for all review types would see the timescale for Type A reviews reduced to 20 weeks at best. This shorter timescale would be welcomed

4c) Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings?

The total timescale for any review, on the face of it, appears to be unduly long and any measure to reduce this should be welcomed. However the constraints necessary to provide sufficient time to, in particular, conduct meaningful consultations mean that it may prove very difficult to reduce the duration of a review significantly.

5a) Should LGBCE shift the emphasis to maximising electoral equality at the first election to follow a review from the maximisation of equality in five years' time?

On balance, given the current economic situation and the more recent examples of residential developments not necessarily coming to fruition as expected, this change in approach is considered reasonable.

5b) How should we decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage us to recommend short-term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five years' time?

No response offered.

Yours faithfully,


Amanda Chidgey
Democratic Services Manager



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Corporate Management

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| | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| Contact | Amanda Chidgey |
| | [REDACTED] |
| | [REDACTED] |
| Your ref | AJC |
| Our ref | Our Reference |
| Date | 22 December 2010 |

Dear Sir / Madam,

**On the right lines? A consultation on policy and procedures
for principal area boundary reviews**

Colchester Borough Council welcomes the opportunity to comment to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's proposals on principal area boundary reviews.

Set out below are this Council's responses to the various specific questions posed in the consultation document:

1a) Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

The classifications proposed are welcomed and considered appropriate.

1b) Under what circumstances should 'compound' reviews be carried out?

Compound reviews, taking the opportunity to extend the scope of a review in order to address other anomalies, are welcomed in order to build in a pragmatic approach in relation to certain circumstances. However, they should only be undertaken with the consent of the proposers of the review.

2a) Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

The review criteria are considered to be a helpful measure against which to judge a request.

2b) Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

It is not considered that there would be any difficulty in collecting evidence in support of a request for a review. It is assumed that local authorities would have considered these or very similar measures in drawing up a request for a review prior to its submission.

3) Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?
The proposed procedures for each type of review are considered clear and reasonable. It is anticipated that they should provide for the speedier conclusion of the less complex types of review and they will also take account of the relative resources required for the various scales of reviews.

4) Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

The approach to the type of public consultation required for the different types of review is supported. In addition, the reference in the consultation document acknowledging that there may be occasions where the absence of majority local support might still warrant the commencement of a review (such as in order to more effectively deliver local government) is welcomed.

5) Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

The assurances in relation to the judgement of Section 151 Officers is welcomed.

6) Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

The Commission's approach, seeking to minimise unnecessary burdens but acknowledging the need to take into account wider statutory responsibilities is considered both clear and reasonable.

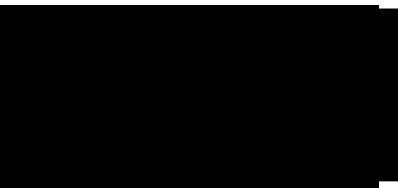
7) How much notice of the Commission's intention to undertake a review would be necessary in order to give councils sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

It is not necessarily possible to provide a clear timeframe for notice of a review, especially in respect of large scale reviews. In general terms 12 months notice of a review with significant potential consequences would be preferable in order to adequately build into a work programme.

8) Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

The suggested prompts are considered helpful and comprehensive.

Yours faithfully,



Amanda Chidgey
Democratic Services Manager



Dunkeyson, Nicholas

From: Owen, David
Sent: 17 January 2011 15:29
To: Gregory, Eleanor
Subject: Consultation FW:Cumbria County Council.
Attachments: 24.12.10 - Letter to Boundary Commission from EM & SFY.doc

David Owen Policy & Research Officer

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From: Dixon, Kirsty L [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 December 2010 14:10
To: Futures@ (LGBCE)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Response to Consultation on Policy & Procedures for Electoral Reviews

Good afternoon,

Please find attached response to Consultation on Policy & Procedures for Electoral Reviews from Cumbria County Council.

Best Regards,

Kirsty Dixon
Diary Secretary
Chief Executive's Office | Cumbria County Council
The Courts | Carlisle | Cumbria | CA3 8NA

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24 December 2010

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

Dear Sirs

CONSULTATION ON POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR ELECTORAL REVIEWS

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on policy and procedures for electoral reviews. You will be aware that Cumbria County Council is currently undergoing an electoral review and you will also be aware of our strong feeling, that the review of council size is both unnecessary and untimely when we are currently contending with the demands of the CSR.

Our response to this consultation focuses on the question of reviews of council size (Question 3) and we agree strongly with the proposal in paragraph 40, that a national formula for council size should not be imposed.

We also strongly support your proposals for a triage approach, making the review process proportionate in the case of considering council size.

In Cumbria we see there being no need or desire for significant change in council size. The current review has been triggered by electoral imbalances and under the existing criteria this has led to an unnecessary review of council size. The work that has been generated is disproportionate to the problem caused by electoral imbalance.

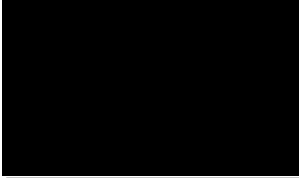
The proposals set out for a criteria-based approach to determine council size are not only desirable but necessary in times of challenging resources for local government.

We believe that the present review should be paused until such time as these new proposals have been considered.

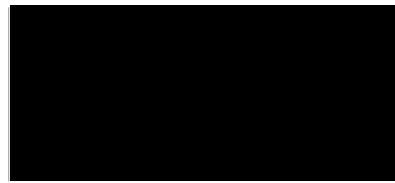
Following the consultation quite rightly titled 'Striking The Right Balance' we would be happy for the electoral imbalances in Cumbria to be addressed without necessitating a full review of council size. We would go further however and we believe it is quite inequitable in a two-tier area to consider only the electoral composition of the county council whilst ignoring the clear and obvious plethora of councillors in the associated District/Borough councils. In other words, we would argue strongly for an area approach to electoral reviews rather than a single authority approach.

This would seem to 'Strike the Right Balance'.

Yours sincerely



Eddie Martin
Leader of the Council



Stewart Young
Deputy Leader of the Council

Cambridge City Council - response to the two reviews.

Principal Area Boundary Reviews

Question 1A

Do you think that classifying PABRs is helpful and is the proposed classification appropriate?

We agree that the classification is helpful. It may be even more helpful to indicate how many electors you envisage being covered by each type (i.e. how many electors is “relatively few”, how many is “a sizeable number”? Might it be helpful to include an indicative schema along the following lines? 2000 > = “small”, 2000 - 5000 = “medium”, 5000 < = “large”).

The number bands might be expressed as proportions of the existing authority populations or electorates. 10,000 in East Cambridgeshire for example, would be rather more significant there than in a large city.

Question 1B

Under what circumstances should ‘compound’ reviews be carried out?

We agree that compound review should only be carried out with the agreement of the initial proposers.

Question 2A

Are the review criteria relevant and/or should there be other criteria?

The criteria strike us as sensible – we assume that “value for money” means that the change will lead to more efficient service delivery.

The only other criterion we would suggest is the interests of good planning if this is not covered by "community identities and interests". For instance, it may be appropriate to take account of development proposals for areas that are the subject of PABRs – the identities and interests of future communities, and how they integrate into existing communities.

Question 2B

Do you think that local authorities and others would be able to assemble evidence showing how a proposed boundary change would have merits in terms of the criteria?

The proposals suggest that authorities should provide evidence to show that the changes would meet the criteria listed. This seems sensible and would provide a framework for assembling a case, but would require a lot of 'up front' work (e.g. in service re-design and public consultation).

We therefore think that providing evidence should be a requirement once the LGBCE has given provisional support for the review in its 'pre-review stage'. The 'pathways' at para 32 suggest this is the case.

Question 3

Is the initiation process clear and reasonable? If not, how could it be improved?

Yes, although an indication of likely timescale would be helpful.

Question 4

Is the Commission's approach to evidence of local support clear and appropriate?

Yes, the approach is clear. However, this is a significant amount of work to carry out. Again, we would like to see this programmed after the 'pre-review' stage.

Question 5

Is the assurance required about the financial implications of proposed changes clear and reasonable?

Yes, this seems sensible and proportionate, depending upon the timing of work within the pathway. A full business case would require detailed work with each service and should only be done once we have 'in principle' agreement to the review from LGBCE.

Question 6

Is the Commission's overall approach to consequential electoral arrangements clear and reasonable?

Yes although the Commission's approach to Type B reviews (as we envisage) is too restrictive. If areas that are similar in electorate to wards are to be moved from one authority to another there should be an option to adjust council size by creating new wards from the transferred areas as an alternative to a disruptive whole authority review.

Question 7

How much notice of a review would be necessary if councils are to have sufficient time to prepare the evidence to demonstrate the merits and other impact of a change to their boundaries?

It is going to depend on the nature of the review. It would be sensible for the Commission to consider different periods of notice depending on the scale of the review.

We would suggest six months for a Type A review, 9-12 months for a Type B review, and 12-24 months for Types C and D.

Question 8

Are there any other matters which might be the subject of appropriate prompts?

Do the proposals take account of planned and anticipated future development of the areas affected by the proposed review?

Are we clear that "Effective And Convenient Local Government" and "Reflecting Community Identity" cover our issues relating to the planning of new and extended communities?

Has a sustainability impact assessment been conducted?

There is a comment that the Commission does not have the power to adjust parish council boundaries but that's the Secretary of State may do so in implementing proposals from the Commission. Some guidance on the parish council issue would be very helpful. A summary of the practical issues around boundary reviews would also be very helpful; e.g. the transfer of assets consequent upon boundary changes.

Policy and Procedures for Electoral Reviews

Question 1A

Do you think that setting out principles by which electoral reviews are conducted is helpful?

Yes.

Question 1B

Are the principles set out above appropriate and adequate? If not, what other principles should be adopted?

Yes.

Question 2

Is the classification of types of review set out appropriate and adequate?

Change could be helpful in some circumstances. One problem in some cases with the Committee's recent arrangements is a rigid approach to council size. If the only reason a review is needed is rapid population growth in a small part of the authority it should be possible to increase the representation of that area if it enables a compliant representation scheme overall with minimal or no disruption elsewhere within the authority. Where new communities are built on currently undeveloped sites that could easily happen. One example where that might have minimised electoral disruption was the North Hertfordshire Further Electoral Review. Any flexibility in this area will obviously only affect council size at the margin. The commission's proposals and question 3 cover the broader question of council size.

Question 3A

Is a criteria based approach to determining council-size desirable?

Yes.

Question 3B

Are the elements set out above for criteria-based decisions appropriate and adequate? If not, what other elements should be included?

The only possible additional element that occurs to us is the geographical make-up of the Council. A council made up of small communities separated by distance may need more councillors (than a council covering an urban area). Possibly this could be brought within the criterion of "the representative role of the elected member".

There is a link here between an assessment of the number of councillors needed in terms of workload, and the Ward boundaries appropriate to a particular Council. It may not always be right therefore that, as seems to be suggested, the decision on council size is made rigidly before consideration of Ward boundaries.

Question 4A

Are the stages of the reviews as shown in Figure 1 clear and appropriate?

Question 4B

Do you think that trying to reduce the duration of review periods is helpful?

Question 4C

Does the timescale for each stage provide sufficient opportunity for councils and other bodies to make necessary decisions, having regard to the frequency and timing of formal council meetings?

The present arrangements are led by proposals by the authority which are consulted on locally before submission and may be accompanied by other locally-generated proposals. Getting rid of this stage with the first draft

proposals coming from the commission, an outside body with limited local knowledge and without the benefit of local consultation, would be a seriously retrograde step.

The other concern is that consultation processes must not allow consultees to make assertions which cannot be challenged by others during the consultation period. Whilst we would not advocate a move to local inquiries, there must be opportunities for some sort of dialogue so that the Commission can be assured of the strength and support for all arguments presented to it when it considers the results of consultation. Perhaps the initial representations could be published and then subject to further comment for a limited period in an open fashion. The internet offers opportunities here which were not previously possible.

Question 5A

Should LGBCE shift the emphasis to maximising electoral equality at the first election to follow a review from the maximisation of equality in five years' time?

No. Cambridge did some of the best work in the last review to get a grip on forward electorate changes, with considerable success. We should not abandon the principle now. Going for equality shortly after the time of a review would undermine the principle of equality of electorates. One of the strengths of the local government review process is that it is not bound to fail by using old data as the parliamentary boundary review process is. The current thinking there is to change boundaries every 5 years. Such frequent disruption is not necessary if sensible forward planning is conducted.

Question 5B

How should we decide whether a forecast of future patterns of electorate is sufficiently reliable to encourage us to recommend short term imbalances in favour of good electoral equality in five years' time?

The County Council forecasting team produced valuable data, in marked contrast to the way it was done in many other councils' reviews. But such population projections have to be done for service planning purposes. It is often overlooked that demographic effects like the long-term decline in household size, can have as much effect on future changes in electorate as planned new developments. The overall projections should be brought into all reviews conducted by the Commission. These would stand alongside consideration of local plans which form part of the process too. Indeed it was the late appearance of a major planning application in the city that caused a late change to the Cambridge proposals which made them rather more future-proof.