

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee was held on 31 July 2013.

PRESENT: Councillors Clark, (Chair), Brunton, Mawston, McIntyre, Mrs H Pearson, OBE and B Thompson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Hawthorne, Lowes and Williams

OFFICERS: S Harker, L Henman, R Long, J Polson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillor P Purvis.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

13/3 MINUTES - CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE - 28 JUNE 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee held on 28 June 2013 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

13/4 BOUNDARY COMMISSION

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report to consider a proposed response to the Boundary Commission's proposals following the Electoral Review of Middlesbrough Council in order to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

During the preliminary stage of the Review the Commission accepted the view of the Council that the Council size should reduce from 48 elected Members plus the elected Mayor to 46 elected Members plus the elected Mayor, and that this Council size would best ensure effective governance and decision making arrangements in the future.

In May 2013 the Commission issued proposals for a new pattern of ward arrangements for the town and consultation on these proposals was due to end on 5 August 2013.

It was highlighted that throughout their report the Commission quoted that they had used projected elector figures based on the 2012 elector numbers. However, the figures used by the Commission were actually projections based on 2011 elector numbers. It was confirmed that despite using the 2011 numbers, there were no material differences in the elector projections or the average variance figures. It was proposed that this was highlighted in the Council's response to the Commission. Based on the 2012 elector numbers, whilst there were some changes to the variation on the target elector numbers, all proposed wards remained within +/-10% electoral equality target.

From a planning perspective there were no issues of specific concern to highlight. The Community Regeneration Team had highlighted that from a communities' perspective, the logical boundaries were the main roads - Cargo Fleet lane, Ormesby Road and Longlands Road and Ormesby Beck. Whilst this might make sense in terms of the geography of east Middlesbrough, this approach did not meet the requirements for electoral equality.

In the north west of the Borough the group of houses to the west of the Territorial Army Centre on Stockton Road were included in the proposed Ayresome Ward. This was due to the Commission adopting the A19 as the proposed eastern boundary. This group of electors appeared isolated from the remainder of the Ayresome Ward and would have to travel through the Newport Ward to get to it. It was also likely that they would have a significant journey to the polling station to vote.

It was suggested that the northern boundary of the Ayresome Ward should be the A66, thus bringing Stockton Road and the Maze Park Nature Reserve into the proposed Newport Ward.

There were currently 36 electors in the area and, as a result, this proposal would have no material impact on electoral equality for either of the two proposed wards. A map showing the Commission's proposals and the proposed change was attached at Appendix A to the submitted report.

A further suggestion was made that the boundary should be the A19 rather than the A66, so that Teesside Retail Park would also be included in the Newport Ward.

It had been suggested that the warding in relation to the Linthorpe Conservation Area be reviewed. In the Commission's proposals this straddled two wards - Linthorpe and Park. It had been suggested that having the conservation area in a single ward would be helpful for good governance. It would be possible to adjust the proposed boundaries to accommodate this suggestion and the proposed boundaries were shown in Appendices B and C to the submitted report. Linthorpe would become a three Councillor ward and Park would be a two Councillor ward.

Consideration was given to three further proposals regarding the Acklam Ward as follows:

- Move the Acklam/Kader boundary on the west side so that The Avenue of Trees from Acklam Hall fell within Acklam Ward rather than Kader Ward. This would have no impact on electors.
- Move the houses in the north eastern corner on Emerson Avenue and Ravenscroft Avenue from Acklam Ward to Park Ward. This affected approximately 151 electors and would impact on the proposal in relation to the Linthorpe and Park Wards.
- Move the houses in the St David's area from Kader Ward to Acklam Ward.

Under the current ward arrangement, Parliamentary Constituency boundaries between Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland were coterminous with ward boundaries. Under the Commission's proposal this would not be the case with ward and constituency boundaries separating in the proposed Ladgate and Kader Wards and the Berwick Hills and Pallister and Park End and Beckfield Wards. Coterminous ward and parliamentary boundaries were not a factor that the Commission took into account when determining ward boundaries. However, the position could cause confusion for electors and potentially have a detrimental impact on turnout, as well as not being the most efficient. It was proposed that this issue should also be highlighted to the Commission.

ORDERED that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services would write to the Boundary Commission setting out the Council's response to the draft proposals and include the following points:

1. Highlight the error in quoting the 2011 based projections as the 2012 projections.
2. Propose that the northern boundary of the Ayresome Ward was the A66, thus bringing Stockton Road and the Maze Park Nature Reserve into Newport Ward.
3. Request that the warding in relation to the Linthorpe and Park Wards be further reviewed to include the Linthorpe Conservation area in the Linthorpe Ward in its entirety.
4. Move the Acklam/Kader boundary on the west side so that The Avenue of Trees from Acklam Hall fell within Acklam Ward rather than Kader Ward.
5. Highlight the mismatch of ward and parliamentary constituency boundaries between Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland.