

BOUNDARY AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2014 at 7.00 pm at Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor David Green (Chairman); Councillors Duncan, Gideon, Hornus, Roberts, W Scobie and E Green

6. ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor W Scobie and seconded by Councillor Hornus that:

Councillor D Green be elected Chairman of the Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicholson, who was substituted by Councillor E Green.

8. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor W Scobie and seconded by Councillor Hornus that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 January 2014 were approved as a correct record.

10. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS - MARGATE

Councillor Mrs Johnston spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1

The Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager introduced the report, the results of the first stage public consultation and the decisions the Working Party needed to take in order for the community governance review to progress to the second stage consultation.

Members were concerned about the low level of responses to the first stage consultation but recognised that it might not have been easy for members of the public to respond when presented with such a wide range of options for the area. The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager explained that the Stage 2 consultation would be different, because the Working Party needed to agree very specific proposals at this meeting, which it was hoped would elicit a larger response.

Despite the consultation responses largely only drawing a distinction between Westgate and the rest of the un-parished area of Margate, it was suggested by some Members that Westbrook may have more in common with Westgate, and that option should be a specific part of the Stage 2 consultation.

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager commented that a good deal of such specific options could be included in the Stage 2 consultation, but there would be a difficulty drawing the line as to which specific options to present. It would be simpler, and easier for the public to understand, if one specific set of proposal were put forward, but the consultation explained the choices available; those choices would include agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal, or suggesting a different proposal with, for example, different boundaries.

Members agreed to attend residents' association meetings etc. to engage the public more and ask them to get involved. It was noted that the public needed to know any difference between a Parish and Town Council and understand what Parish councillors and Town councillors can and cannot do.

The Finance Manager said he would come to the next meeting with possible precept figures for any new Town/Parish Councils for 2015/16, but at this early stage they would only be indicative and based on a set of assumptions, although he did comment that the precept for Ramsgate had risen by 111% since it was set up. He also told the Working Party that it could cost the council £25k to hold an election for Margate if it coincided with another election or £50k if it were to be on its own (although such a scenario may be unlikely). Members agreed that in Stage 2 of the consultation the public should be made aware of the possible costs for a Margate Town council and a Westgate Parish council in terms of a possible precept.

It was proposed by Councillor W Scobie, and seconded by Councillor E Green that the following be the subject of the second stage public consultation; that:

1. A "Margate Town Council" be created for the un-parished area of Margate excluding the District Ward of Westgate on Sea; with the same number and distribution of Councillors as the current District Wards, that is to say 17 Councillors in all; and,
2. A "Westgate Parish Council" be created for the area covered by the current District Ward of Westgate-on-Sea, with 10 parish councillors.

The Working Party was content for the first election to these Councils to take place at the scheduled elections on 7 May 2015 and made no proposals for grouping or de-grouping of parishes, or any proposals to change existing District of County electoral boundaries that would warrant referral to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

RESOLVED

The Working Party also agreed to meet on 24 July 2014 to consider detailed proposals for the Stage 2 public consultation and agree the information regarding possible levels of precepts that would be included in the consultation documents.

One Member raised concerns about the review of electoral arrangements being undertaken by Kent County Council (KCC), and how proposals apparently emerging from that might impact on the community governance review. The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager noted that he had not yet seen specific proposals emerging from KCC, but agreed to obtain more information.

Meeting concluded : 7.55 pm