

BOUNDARY AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2014 at 7.00 pm at Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor David Green (Chairman); Councillors Duncan, Gideon, Nicholson, Roberts, W Scobie and K Gregory

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hornus, who was substituted by Councillor K Gregory.

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2014

It was proposed by Councillor Duncan and seconded by Councillor Gideon that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July were approved as a correct record subject to substitution of the word "but" for "and" so that the second line of paragraph 3 of minute 10 reads "... and recognised that it...".

MATTERS ARISING FOR THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager gave an update on the review of electoral arrangements being undertaken by Kent County Council (KCC).

He had spoken with the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership who confirmed that there were no specific proposals within KCC's review which would affect Thanet's district wards. Furthermore, KCC's review had not yet been submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and the outcome would not be implemented until May 2017. Currently, although KCC had expressed a preference for single member electoral divisions it had not specifically requested them from the LGBCE.

14. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager introduced the report on proposed second-stage public consultation arrangements and details of the precepts that might be set by the new town/parish councils.

He then introduced the Corporate Information Manager and Finance Manager who both spoke on their respective elements of the consultation document.

Public consultation (Stage 2)

Members asked that the proposed online questionnaire be kept as clear as possible and easy to follow.

With this in mind it was agreed to amend some of the questions to make the online form easier to complete.

On the grounds that the full range of governance options had been offered for public consultation in Satge 1, it was decided to remove the second part of question 3, so that the question is closed:

“Do you agree with the proposal above for two new Parish/Town Councils (Margate Town Council and Westgate-on-Sea Parish Council)?”

Furthermore, it was agreed to add the following question to the end of the online form:

“Do you have any other comments about the proposal for the above for the future governance of Westgate-on-Sea?”

The Corporate Information Manager informed Members that a paper copy of the consultation document would be made available to people that requested one. The Working Party agreed that the consultation document needed to be made “attractive” in order to generate interest.

Hyperlinks would be used throughout the online consultation document. Due to the restrictions of the web publishing software it was not possible to have “dialogue boxes” which would provide further information when a cursor was moved over certain words.

Some members raised concerns that the consultation wouldn’t be seen by those with no internet access. The Corporate Information Manager informed Members that as budgets were limited, targeting all residents was impossible. The Communication Implementation Plan detailed the proposed methods of reaching residents within the budgetary constraints.

It was agreed that the consultation document would reiterate the different roles/powers between the Charter Trustees and town/parish councils so that residents could make up their own minds.

Proposed precepts

The Finance Manager gave a summary of the possible precepts for the town and parish councils based on a number of assumptions. However, he stressed that these figures were based on existing levels of service provision and functions that must transfer from the Margate Charter Trustees to the new town/parish Councils. Any additional services the town or parish councils would like to deliver would increase the precept.

Some Members discussed the possibility of using the existing reserves of the Charter Trustees to pay for the inaugural elections but were advised against basing projected precepts on that basis. The decision of what to do with the reserves would be down to the newly created town and parish council.

The Working Party agreed that the Finance Manager’s assumptions would not be included in the public consultation document in detail because there were best guesses based upon the limited information currently available; however the precepts for a Band D property would be included (but without the percentage increase from the Current precept of the Margate Charter Trustees). Thus the consultation documents would cite possible Band D precepts of £14.86 for Margate Town Council and £24.58 for Westgate Parish Council.

Also, it was agreed that that it would be a good idea to show the yearly precepts for other local town/parish councils in the consultation thus giving residents a comparison.

With this in mind the consultation document would also be amended to emphasise that the suggested precepts for a Margate Town Council and Westgate-on-Sea Parish

Council were based on no additional service provisions being made available; and that any additional services would increase the precept.

It was proposed by Councillor K Gregory, and seconded by Councillor R Nicholson that:

1. The programme and content of the second stage public consultation programme be agreed as amended;
2. The consultation documents would cite possible Band D precepts of £14.86 for Margate Town Council and £24.58 for Westgate Parish Council.

RESOLVED

Meeting concluded : 8.20 pm