

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee held on
Wednesday, 16 April 2008 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs BE Waters – Chairman

Councillors: NCF Bolitho EW Bullman
DH Morgan NJ Scarr
RT Summerfield JF Williams

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
Greg Harlock Chief Executive
Gareth Jones Corporate Manager, Planning & Sustainable
Communities

Councillors Mrs SJO Doggett, SM Edwards, Mrs EM Heazell, MP Howell, Mrs CA Hunt, SGM Kindersley, Mrs JE Lockwood, Mrs DSK Spink MBE, Mrs HM Smith and RJ Turner were in attendance, by invitation.

The following parish councils were represented: Fulbourn Parish Council, Harston Parish Council, Histon Parish Council, Impington Parish Council, Milton Parish Council and Teversham Parish Council

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors SJO Doggett and NJ Scarr declared personal interests as members of Fulbourn Parish Council. Councillors HM Smith and RT Summerfield declared personal interests as members of Milton Parish Council. Councillor Mrs CA Hunt declared a personal interest as a member of Teversham Parish Council.

11. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2008 were accepted as a correct record.

12. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT / CAMBRIDGE CITY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Principal Solicitor introduced this report, which was the result of discussions between the Chief Executives of this authority and Cambridge City Council. The report recommended that a joint submission be made from both authorities to the Boundary Committee for England. The Principal Solicitor explained that any submission made to the Boundary Committee would be subject to a delay of 18 months to two years, before it was considered. On commencement of the process there would be full consultation with all interested parties including Parish Councils.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that in his opinion the proposed recommendations represented the best possible agreement for this authority that the City Council were also prepared to endorse. The Leader supported the proposals in the report as the best way to protect the District's villages from an alternative submission to the Boundary Commission from the City Council.

Housing allocation

In response to questioning the Chief Executive and the Leader both confirmed that there would be no agreement by Council on a boundary alteration without a signed guarantee from the Secretary of State that the Council's allocation of new build homes would be

unaffected by the change. It was noted that a verbal assurance had already been given.

Consultation

Concern was expressed that the Boundary Committee would be minded to accept any recommendation which had the support of both this authority and the City Council, thus making subsequent consultation with the residents meaningless. The Principal Solicitor reiterated that the Boundary Committee were obliged to carry out full consultation before the proposals could be formally agreed.

It was suggested that Cambridgeshire Constabulary should be consulted on these proposals, which should also be discussed by the relevant neighbourhood panels.

Financial implications

In response to concerns that the suggested transfer of populated areas to the City Council in return for unpopulated areas could have adverse financial implications for the Council, the Chief Executive explained that due to the intricacies of the Local Government finance settlement South Cambridgeshire District Council lost money on all new properties, whilst the City Council did not. He concluded that the overriding factor should be whether the proposals supported the sense of community in the areas affected.

Science Park and Chesterton Fen Road

The Chief Executive stated that under the report's proposals the Science Park would remain in South Cambridgeshire, which would be financially advantageous to the Council should revenue from business rates return to district authorities. However, Councillors HM Smith and RT Summerfield, local members for Milton, asserted that the area of Milton parish which was south of the A14 should become the responsibility of the City Council, as the road formed a natural barrier and so this area logically formed part of the City.

Jane Coston of Milton Parish Council asserted that Chesterton Fen should not be included in the parish of Milton, as it had access roads to the City and not to Milton village. She requested that, in future maps, this area be marked as an anomaly.

North West Cambridge

The Principal Solicitor explained that the area north west of Cambridge, which was scheduled for development, had been excluded from the boundary discussions, pending the outcome with regard to that development.

Foxglove and Beechwood estate

Councillors NJ Scarr and Mrs CA Hunt, the local members for Fulbourn and Teversham, stated that the Foxglove and Beechwood estates had been part of the Teversham and Fulbourn parishes for at least 15 years and it would be wrong to agree to transfer their residents to the City Council without consulting them. Councillor Scarr proposed that the transfer of the Foxglove and Beechwood estates be removed from the proposals and not be reinserted without the consent of its residents. There was no seconder for the proposal and so it fell.

Land at Marshalls Airport

Councillor Mrs Hunt explained that there was the potential for 12,000 homes to be built at the site of Marshall's airport, with over half of them being built in the parish of Teversham, but if the proposed boundary changes were approved the area would be entirely in Cambridge City and there was no guarantee that the residents of Teversham would be consulted over the new development.

Teversham

Councillor Mrs Hunt stated that the proposed boundary change would reduce the

population of Teversham by two thirds and this should not be allowed to happen without consulting the residents affected.

Simon Martin of Teversham Parish Council made the following points:

- The Parish Council could better respond to concerns of its residents than the City Council
- Teversham Parish Council's finances would be adversely affected by the loss of residents
- Those on Foxglove Estate would continue to benefit from Teversham's amenities, even if they were transferred to the City Council
- Residents should be consulted fully on any future plans for Marshalls airport

Trumpington Meadows

Councillor Mrs EM Hezell, the local member for Haslingfield, explained that half of the Trumpington Meadows development was in the parish of Haslingfield and as things stood part of the cost of the development would have to be met by the Parish Council. For this reason there would be little objection to the transfer of Trumpington Meadows to the City Council. However, Councillor Mrs Hezell concluded that in her view delay was inevitable as it would be unfair on residents to agree proposals to transfer them to the City Council without consulting them. Unfortunately delay in the transfer of land in Haslingfield parish to the City Council would inevitably mean extra costs for the parish council with regard to the development proposed on that land.

Joint planning arrangements

The Chief Executive confirmed that existing joint planning committees would be unaffected by the proposals. Future joint planning arrangements were to be determined.

Arbury Camps

Councillor MJ Mason, the local member for Impington, suggested that there was an inconsistency with regard to the proposed transfer of Arbury Camps to the City Council but the retention of the area of Milton, south of the A14. The Chief Executive warned that insistence on using the A14 as a boundary could result in the transfer of part of Girton to the City Council.

City Council meeting

The Chief Executive explained that the City Council were holding a meeting to discuss these proposals at the same time as this authority.

Traveller sites

The Corporate Manager for Planning and Sustainable Communities confirmed that under the proposals in the report no Traveller sites would be transferred to the City Council. It was noted that no Traveller sites were proposed in the land marked to be transferred to the City Council.

Congestion charge

The Leader stated that he was not aware of any connection between the proposals under discussion and a congestion charge. It was noted that the decision on whether to introduce a congestion charge would be made by the County Council.

Parish precept

Concern was expressed at the potential loss of revenue for many of the Parish Councils that would be affected by the implementation of these proposals. It was noted that some parish councils had made long term financial commitments, which would be jeopardised should a significant number of tax payers be transferred to the City Council.

It was suggested that parishes should increase their precepts in anticipation of the decline in revenue caused by the loss of residents. However, the Chief Executive explained that it was impossible to predict changes in boundaries before they were agreed or to know how long it would take to implement these changes.

Including parish boundaries on the map

Janet Hendy, clerk of Haslingfield Parish Council, suggested that the map in the proposals should be expanded to show the parishes surrounding Cambridgeshire and their boundaries.

Park & Ride

It was noted that under these proposals Babraham Park and Ride site would be transferred to the City Council, which would be beneficial to the District Council under the present financial regime for concessionary fares.

Discussing the recommendation

The Committee praised the Chief Executives of both Councils for tabling the proposals in the report and recognised that whatever the Committee eventually proposed this represented an excellent starting point. It was suggested that the proposal should be amended so that South Cambridgeshire retained the Beechwood and Foxglove estates but transferred the areas of Milton that were south of the A14. However, the Committee decided that no firm commitments should be made before consulting the District's residents through the Parish Councils.

It was understood that some Parish Councils had not had time to meet to discuss these proposals. It was agreed that all Parish Councils be invited to consult with their parishioners on this matter. It was noted that there would not be any funding from the Council to assist the Parish Councils in their consultation exercises.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to defer a decision on this item pending a two-month period of consultation with all parish councils on the boundary review proposal.

It was noted that this issue would be brought before this Committee as soon as practicable after the consultation period. It would be determined by the Council meeting on 17 July 2008.

The Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.
