

Committee: COUNCIL
Date: 15 APRIL 2003
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: FIFTH GENERAL REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY
CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES
Author: Peter Snow (01799) 510431

Summary

- 1 The Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries is in the process of being conducted by the Boundary Commission for England (BCE). It is expected that provisional recommendations for Essex will be announced early in May. A period of one month will be allowed for representations. This report suggests a method for enabling the Council to submit its views within the allowed period.

Background

- 2 The present review of Parliamentary boundaries has been underway for some time. The timetable announced by the BCE indicates that provisional recommendations for constituencies in Essex will be published in early May. The statutory procedure allows only a one-month period for the submission of written representations.
- 3 The rules state that a local inquiry must take place if a local authority objects to the provisional recommendations. An inquiry took place on the occasion of the fourth general review several years ago at which the Council was represented.
- 4 The available figures suggest a strong possibility that Essex will be awarded an additional constituency as part of this review. If this happens, substantial adjustments to constituency boundaries may be necessary and it is important that the interests of the Council and its residents are safeguarded.
- 5 The timing of the Essex review is difficult because the Council will be in limbo in terms of committee membership until the Annual Meeting on 20 May and the Resources Committee does not meet again until 26 June.

Solution

- 6 It is suggested that, in view of the uncertainty of the outcome of the District Council elections, members agree that the officers be authorised, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to prepare a report for the Annual Meeting of the Council on whether the Council should submit formal written representations either supporting or objecting to the provisional

recommendations of the BCE, as appropriate, including the formulation of a detailed counter-proposal if one can be agreed. If the timing of the publication of the BCE's proposals is such that it is not practicable to prepare a report in time for the Annual Meeting, the new Council will be asked to appoint a Parliamentary Boundaries Task Group with power to act.

RECOMMENDED that the officers be authorised, in consultation with Group Leaders, to prepare a report for the Annual Meeting of the Council on the course of action to be taken following publication of the BCE's provisional recommendations for Essex.

Background papers: The Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in England produced by the Boundary Commission for England

Committee: Council
Date: 15 April 2003
Agenda Item No: 9
Title: Member/Officer Protocol
Author: E Forbes (01799) 510400

Summary

- 1 This report recommends the adoption of a revised protocol for member/officer relations, following discussion at the recent meeting of the Standards Committee.

Background

- 2 The current Member/officer protocol was approved by the Council on 10 October 2000. It is included in the Members' Handbook. Since then new legislation and the introduction of the new Code of Conduct for members has necessitated some review of the protocol. Recent reports from the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) and the Audit Commission have noted some decline in the quality of member/officer relations in Uttlesford and have also recommended that the protocol be reviewed.
- 3 A revised draft protocol was circulated to all members in advance of the two workshops held for members and officers on 26 February 2003. The workshops were facilitated by Paul Wheeler from the Improvement & Development Agency and included a presentation by a leading member of Colchester Borough Council and discussions on case studies. Some further editorial changes have been made following those sessions and comments made by individual members. The Standards Committee considered the draft

on 2 April 2003 and made some final revisions. All these changes have now been incorporated in the attached draft which shows in italics all changes made to the previously approved protocol.

- 4 It is proposed that the new protocol should be in place for the new Council to be elected on 1 May. It will be important to ensure that new members of the Council have the opportunity to understand fully the protocol and the expectations it places on members and officers. The protocol will therefore be included in briefing sessions for new members.

The Standards Committee accordingly

RECOMMENDS that the Council adopts the revised member/officer protocol.

Background Papers: Uttlesford District Council - Councillors' Code of Conduct