

Proposed Work Programme for the Electoral Working Group 2011/12

Polling district review: the review will proceed under the proposed timetable (once agreed) between 1 September and 1 December 2011 (refer to the detailed report under item 7). Meetings of the EWG will be needed in early October and early November respectively.

As a result of the FER (see below) it is likely that a further review of polling districts will be needed before the next statutory review is due in 2015. Such a review should follow the publication of final proposals for new ward boundaries at some stage prior to the election (expected to be in May 2015).

Parliamentary boundary review: the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is required to report to the Government by 1 October 2013 with final proposals for re-drawn constituencies. The BCE intends to publish its initial proposals in the week beginning 12 September 2011. The Council must then decide whether it wishes to either support or object to the proposals. There will be a 12 week public consultation period. The BCE will conduct public hearings in each region during the consultation period. For the Eastern Region these will take place in Colchester, Norwich, Luton and Cambridge between 31 October and 11 November. It is only necessary to be represented at one of the hearings.

If the Council wishes to object, the objection will carry more weight if a counter-proposal is made. However, because of the knock-on effects of each change to a constituency boundary, a counter-proposal would need to address the pattern of constituencies across the entire region of 56 proposed seats. This would be an extremely difficult task at a district level.

A secondary consultation period will follow during which written comments may be submitted on those representations already made and published. Revised proposals are then made and there will be a further eight-week period of consultation. The final recommendations and report are then submitted to the Government.

If the Council wishes to engage in this process a meeting of EWG will be needed in the week beginning 19 September so that a recommendation can be made to Council on 27 September. Otherwise the Council could not be represented at any of the proposed public hearings. Alternatively a report could be submitted directly to the September Council meeting but it will be difficult at a full Council meeting to give the necessary time

to examining the BCE's initial proposals and framing a counter-proposal if that is what the Council wishes to do. In any event the time available to consider and respond to the proposals is very tight.

Because the initial proposals are being framed on a regional basis rather than the county basis used in all previous reviews, there is a possibility that the district could be split between two or even three constituencies overlapping more than one county.

Further Electoral Review of Uttlesford District: a Further Electoral Review (FER) of Uttlesford is proposed to begin in July 2012 and be concluded in time for the revised ward boundaries to come into effect at the ordinary 2015 election. Meetings of the EWG will be needed throughout this process.

Community Governance Reviews: the Council has a continuing duty to keep its parish pattern under review and ensure that it is relevant to patterns of population and community identity in the district. Having concluded one review in July, there is no present intention to conduct a further review although the Council did agree to re-examine the boundary at Priors Green in three years' time or as otherwise requested.

A review of parish electoral arrangements may be necessary at some stage, either as a result of a CGR, or because existing arrangements are no longer appropriate (for example in the event of population growth or re-distribution).

Returning Officer's Fees: the fees and expenses payable to the RO are normally examined and updated prior to the ordinary election of district councillors.

Future meetings: given the above, suggested meeting dates are:

- Thursday, 22 September to consider the Parliamentary review
- Monday, 3 October or Wednesday, 5 October for to polling district review (PDR)
- Wednesday, 9 November for the next stage of the PDR

Other dates could be considered if they can be held during the day.

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