

ELECTORAL WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00 pm on 10 OCTOBER 2011

Present: Councillors R Chambers, J Davey, A Dean, E Hicks, J Rose.

Officers in attendance: L Bunting (Electoral Services Officer) and Peter Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager).

EWG12 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Freeman and J Ketteridge.

Councillor Chambers declared an interest as a member of Essex County Council and Essex Fire Authority and also in the item concerning Wicken Bonhunt as he had lived there previously.

EWG13 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Working Group held on 26 September 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EWG14 POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented a report to Members outlining the initial consultation period which began on 1 September and ended formally on 30 September. A large number of representations had been received from councillors, parish councils, and people responsible for existing polling premises such as village hall committees. A detailed letter had also been received from John Mitchell in his capacity of Returning Officer. The legislation required him to comment in this way and Members were asked to have regard to the suggestions and proposals he had made.

The report commented only on those parts of the scheme where either some form of change was considered necessary, or possible changes had been considered as part of the review. However Members were free to comment in whatever way they wished on any individual part of the scheme.

Wicken Bonhunt

At Wicken Bonhunt, it was proposed that St Margaret's Church be designated as the polling place for the parish. The Church was situated in the centre of the village and was presently undergoing a major change of use with an extension being added to the structure as kitchen and toilet facilities. It was proposed to be used as a community centre when not used for religious purposes. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said that the building work should be finished by the end of this year.

Fritch Green

It was proposed that at Fritch Green, the Community Hall be designated as the polling place for the parish of Fritch Green and the name of the new parish would be correctly recorded in the final report.

Little Dunmow

At Little Dunmow, it was proposed that the Community Meeting Room off Brook Street be designated as the polling place for the parish of Little Dunmow in place of the Fritch of Bacon Public House.

Saffron Walden Shire North

It was proposed that the polling district boundary between Shire North and Shire South should remain unaltered but that the R A Butler School be designated as the polling place for the Shire North polling district in place of Four Acres Common Room as the facilities for electors at the school were more reasonable and convenient.

Stansted

It was proposed that Stansted North polling district be sub-divided into two new polling districts as follows:

Stansted North East would be located east of a line drawn through the centre of Cambridge Road from the ward boundary in the south to the parish boundary in the north with the Youth Centre in Lower Street being designated as the polling place for the polling district serving approximately 1015 electors.

Stansted North West ward would be located west of a line drawn through the centre of Cambridge Road from the ward boundary in the south to the parish boundary in the north, with Bentfield Primary School in Rainsford Road being designated as the polling place for the polling district and would serve approximately 1310 electors.

It was proposed that Stansted South ward, including the part of Stansted parish transferred from Birchanger ward would be sub-divided into new polling districts as follows:

That part of Stansted Mountfitchet parish transferred from Birchanger parish under The District of Uttlesford (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2011 would form a new polling district of Foresthall Park. The polling place could not be designated at the moment but would likely be either the Mountfitchet College or the Romeera Leisure Centre and would serve approximately 419 electors. The parish designation would now be changed from Birchanger to Stansted South ward.

Stansted South East would be located to the east of the railway line from the point where it met the northern boundary of the ward to the point where it intersected with the ward boundary in the south. The polling place would be either the Mountfitchet College or the Romeera Leisure Centre as for the Foresthall Park polling district above and would serve approximately 1362 electors.

Eventually, once a consequential changes order could be made and come into effect, the two polling districts listed above would merge. The best long term polling place for this area would probably be the new primary school presently being constructed.

Stansted South West would be located to the west of the railway line from the point where it met the northern boundary of the ward to the point where it intersected the ward boundary in the south. The polling place would be the St John's Church Hall, St John's Road, or the Peter Kirk Centre and would serve approximately 1137 electors.

Takeley

It was proposed that Takeley polling district be sub-divided into new polling districts as follows:

Takeley Priors Green: that part of Takeley parish lying to the east of a straight line running from the point where the polling district boundary with Mole Hill Green was intersected by the road leading from Mole Hill Green to Bambers Green and then running in a roughly southerly direction immediately to the west of Warish Hall and Smiths Green to the centre of Dunmow Road, then in an easterly direction to the junction with Canfield Road, then following the centre of that road to the parish boundary. The Priors Green Community Centre at Bennett Canfield was proposed to be the designated polling place for the new polling district and would serve approximately 590 electors.

Takeley village would then consist of the remainder of Takeley parish not included within either of the Mole Hill Green or Takeley Priors Green polling districts. The polling place would be the Silver Jubilee Hall, Brewers End serving approximately 1868 electors.

Margaret Roding

There seemed to be general agreement that the church was unsuitable and it was proposed to continue the arrangement to designate the whole of the polling district as the polling place and to seek the best polling venue that can be provided at each election.

Members discussed the various proposed changes and made comments regarding buildings that could be utilised as polling stations which the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted. The Chairman said that the proposed changes would now go out to consultation and the final scheme would then be endorsed.

Councillor Hicks asked a question regarding the delegation of the decision to object to the Parliamentary review of constituency boundaries. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said it was unlikely that other authorities would be willing to join the Council's objections to proposals affecting Uttlesford but he would continue to seek agreement wherever possible. The Chairman said the issue would be further discussed at a future meeting.

EWG15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Working Group would be held on Wednesday, 9 November 2011.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.