

**ELECTORAL WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00 pm on 26 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Present: Councillors R Chambers, J Davey, A Dean and E Hicks and J Ketteridge, M Lemon and J Rose.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), L Bunting (Democratic Services Officer) and P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager).

**EWG24 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Freeman.

Councillor J Davey declared an interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council and Councillor M Lemon as a member of Hatfield Heath Parish Council.

**EWG25 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**EWG26 FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented an updated report on the Further Electoral Review. He said that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) would soon reach its conclusions on council size prior to a further twelve-week period for representations to be made on proposed electoral arrangements which would take place from 23 October 2012 until 14 January 2013. The Working Group must therefore work on the assumption that the final number of councillors to be agreed would be 39 as the final recommendation from the LGBCE would not be known until late October and should consider the new warding arrangements with that in mind. The Council's final decision on a revised warding scheme would be put before the Full Council meeting to be held on 11 December 2012.

As requested at the last meeting of the Working Group, the report outlining the options had been circulated to all Councillors for their comments and suggestions. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager had received only a small number of comments. Councillor Dean had suggested a possible rearrangement in numbers which the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager had tried to reconstruct as a map from the figures and put to the Working Group.

No other particular scheme had been put forward and therefore the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager had developed the options already circulated with a more detailed approach which would reflect separate community identities. He said that before a scheme could be approved the precise electorate figures and accurate boundaries would need to be calculated. These figures would need to be 100% reliable before they would be considered by the LGBCE.

The Leader of the Council said that although Members had been consulted as requested at the last meeting so that they all had the opportunity to comment, not every member would be pleased with the outcome. He considered that the Working Group needed to be satisfied that all Members had taken the options on board. He asked that the options be taken to Groups for further discussion.

Members congratulated the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager on the work he had done so far and considered that the authority was well on the way towards a definite plan.

The Chairman agreed that the report should be discussed within the political Groups and suggested holding a further meeting of the Working Group towards the end of November. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that the report should be presented to the next Full Council meeting which would be on 11 December. He said it would be challenging to prepare a full report in the time available and suggested holding an extraordinary meeting in early January instead.

The Leader referred to the pressure of work currently being experienced within the Democratic Services section because of the forthcoming election in November. He agreed with the option of holding an Extraordinary Full Council meeting in January. The Chief Executive agreed with this because the production of the Further Electoral Review was a significant event.

The Chairman said that members were fully aware of the limited time officers had but asked that a second draft of the map containing Councillor Dean's ideas be circulated to all members. This was agreed by all. A further meeting of the Working Group would be arranged before the end of November.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.