

Minutes of a meeting of the Constitution Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 18 June 2003.

PRESENT

Mr. D. R. Parsons CC (in the Chair)

Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. R. Miller CC

Mr. Mike Jones CC
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC

In Attendance:

Mr. N. Brown CC
Mr. P.A. Hyde CC
Mr. R.M. Wilson CC

1. Election of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr D. R. Parsons be elected Chairman of the Committee until the date of the annual meeting of the County Council in May 2004.

Mr D. R. Parsons CC (in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

That Mr R. Miller CC be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Committee until the date of the annual meeting of the County Council in May 2004.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2003 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

5. Questions asked under Standing Order 7(3) and (5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and (5).

6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of Interest.

No declarations of interest were made.

8. Periodic Electoral Review of Leicestershire County Council.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive inviting the Committee to make recommendations to the County Council on a proposed scheme of electoral arrangements in response to the Boundary Committee's invitation to the Authority to submit proposals. The Committee also considered a supplementary report relating to further comments and alternative proposals received since the report had been circulated. Copies of the report and a supplementary report marked 'B' and 'BB' respectively are filed with these minutes.

The Committee discussed in turn the proposals for each of the district areas as follows:-

(a) Blaby

Mr. Galton enquired why the initial draft proposals had been amended, splitting Cosby and South Whetstone District Ward. The Committee was advised that this was a result of further work aimed at improving electoral equality.

(b) Charnwood

Several members raised concerns regarding the splitting of Birstall Watermead Ward commenting that it had little or no community ties with Thurmaston. However, it was noted that no one had been able to offer any practical alternative.

(c) Harborough

Mr. Galton reinforced comments which he had made in writing regarding the need to retain the bulk of Billesdon Ward with Tilton and Thurnby and Houghton District Wards, as proposed in the initial draft proposals, when the new revised draft proposals combined Billesdon with areas with which it had little or no affinity.

(d) Hinckley and Bosworth

The officers were requested to ensure that the proposals affecting Burbage did not split Parish Wards.

(e) Melton

Members raised no issues of concern.

(f) North West Leicestershire

It was noted that North West Leicestershire District Council was looking at several options but their views would not be available until after its Council meeting on 26th June 2003.

(g) Oadby and Wigston

Members' attention was drawn to a letter from Oadby and Wigston Borough Council dated 17th June 2003.

With regard to the Borough Council's suggestion that a two member electoral division be established for Oadby, the Committee was advised of the guidelines issued by the Electoral Commission which were not supportive of establishing multi-member electoral divisions in counties.

Mr. Galton indicated that in his view the proposal to combine Oadby Grange and Oadby St. Peter's Wards was not sensible and that the combination of wards set out in the initial draft proposals better reflected community ties.

(h) General

The Committee was advised that the revised draft proposals attached to the report had been prepared in the light of the various comments received and the opportunities to consider further options. They were considered generally to be an improvement upon the initial draft proposals having regard to the guidelines laid down by the Electoral Commission.

Although it was felt that there was reasonable justification in the few cases where proposed divisions exceeded the 10% level referred to in the guidelines, it was noted that the Boundary Committee was bound to look critically at the County Council's final proposals and to seek to improve upon them.

In response to comments regarding the views of Parish Councils, the Chief Executive undertook to write to all consultees, including Parish Councils, to inform them of the outcome of this meeting and give them an opportunity to make further representations, prior to consideration of the matter by the full Council on 9th July 2003.

It was moved by Mr. Parsons and seconded by Mr. Miller:-

“(a) That the County Council be recommended:-

- (i) to approve the statement set out in Appendix A to the report relating to Council size, as part of the Council's submission to the Boundary Committee;
- (ii) to approve the revised draft proposals set out in Appendix D to the report as the basis of the Council's scheme;

(b) That the Chief Executive be authorised to take all necessary action to draw up a detailed scheme of proposals, including the naming of electoral divisions, for submission to the Boundary Committee for England by the deadline of 7th July 2003, subject to confirmation of the scheme by the County Council at its meeting on 9th July 2003”.

An amendment was moved by Mr. Galton and seconded by Mr. Jones:-

“That paragraph (ii) of the motion be amended to read as follows:-

‘(ii) except in the case of Oadby and Wigston where the initial draft proposals are recommended for adoption, to approve the revised draft proposals set out in Appendix D to the report as the basis of the Council’s scheme”’.

The amendment was put and not carried, two members voting for the amendment and three against.

An amendment was moved by Mr. Galton and seconded by Mr. Jones:-

“That paragraph (ii) of the motion be amended to read as follows:-

‘(ii) except in the case of Harborough where the initial draft proposals are recommended for adoption, to approve the revised draft proposals set out in Appendix D to the report as the basis of the Council’s scheme”’.

The amendment was put and not carried, two members voting for the amendment and three against.

The original motion was put and carried.

9. The Review and Revision of the Constitution and Authorisation of Officers.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive recommending changes to the County Council’s Constitution in the light of experience and to update the list of officers authorised to sign and seal documents. A copy of the report marked ‘C’ is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive undertook to supply Mr Brown with the Government’s Guidance on New Councils Constitutions that provided guidance on Cabinet Support Members and commented that similar positions had been established in several authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council be recommended: -

- (a) to approve the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix A of the report; and
- (b) to agree in respect of the proper officer functions and other delegated powers and functions allocated to the Chief Executive and County Solicitor, that the following officers be authorised to act in their absence:-

County Solicitor (in the absence of the Chief Executive)
 Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Support)
 Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)
 Head of Demographic Services and Administration
 Head of Human Resources
 Head of Legal Services

18 June 2003
11.00 a.m – 12.40 p.m

CHAIRMAN

