

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

5.00PM 26 JULY 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Littman (Chair), Kennedy, J Kitcat, Morgan, A Norman (Deputy Chair), Oxley, Powell, Mitchell, Randall and G Theobald

PART ONE

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW AT SALTDEAN

10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Resources concerning the latest situation regarding a potential review of the local government boundary at Saltdean.

10.2 The Senior Lawyer working on this matter explained that the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) had produced a complex set of guidelines on how they would approach a request for a boundary review since the Committee's last meeting. He outlined the stages which included all affected local authorities (LAs) being in agreement, carrying out a survey, identifying a preferred option and submitting a business case. The business case must demonstrate how the change would represent value for money, how it would result in more effective and convenient local government, how it reflected community identities and interest, and must also consider the electoral impact of the change.

The Senior Lawyer advised that the LGBC would only consider undertaking a review if all affected LAs had endorsed the change. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) remained supportive of a review, however Lewes District Council (LDC), which had undergone a change of Administration, had not yet declared its position. He suggested that the Committee may want to consider giving in principle support for a review and survey, conditional on the agreement of ESCC and LDC.

10.3 The Chair invited Mr Laurence O'Connor, Chair of Saltdean Residents' Association (SRA), to address the Committee.

10.4 Mr O'Connor reported that the matter had been raised with ESCC and LDC, as well Telscombe and Peacehaven Town Councils and that none had objected to considering a review at the time of asking; however, Telscombe Town Council had raised concerns that, depending on the preferred option, the viability of the Town Council could be jeopardised, but that they may be interested in the savings to be gained from merging with the neighbouring Town Council. He urged the Committee to support a boundary

review and a survey and noted that the LAs may benefit financially from any change to the boundary. He stated that a unified approach to the needs of the community would strengthen Saltdean's voice and enable residents to have an impact on whichever LA they became a part of.

- 10.5 Councillor Mitchell stated that she supported the aims of the SRA and hoped progress could be made. She sought clarity on what the Committee would be referring to the Cabinet and asked what the survey would contain and who would design it.
- 10.6 Councillor A Norman stated that a solution for the residents of Saltdean was long overdue and asked whether LDC were considering the issue with any urgency.
- 10.7 Councillor Randall stated that he supported a review in principle, but that consideration must be given to the costs and benefits, and that the position of LDC must be ascertained.
- 10.8 Councillor Oxley advised that cost had not been considered previously because the LGBC guidance had not yet been issued. He stated that clarity of language would be key in dealing with the matter as it could result in major changes and asked how the affected Town Councils would be included in the consultation exercise.
- 10.9 In response to comments from the Committee, the Senior Lawyer made the following points:
- All three LAs would work with the SRA to devise a questionnaire containing a number of options. The LGBC would have sight of the questionnaire prior to circulation to ensure that the answers could successfully form part of the subsequent business case.
 - As the business case would have to include consideration of the electoral impact, it was anticipated that the survey would invite residents to indicate not only whether they wished the boundary to change but where geographically they wanted the boundary redrawn.
 - The Head of Law at LDC had discussed the matter with the council's new Leader, as it would need to be timetabled for consideration by their Cabinet. However, at present there is no indication as to when this agenda item might formally be tabled.
 - The affected Town Councils would be included in the consultation exercise.
- 10.10 Councillor G Theobald stated that obtaining LDC's view was essential as the review could not take place without their agreement. He suggested that the council may benefit if the whole of Saltdean became part of Brighton & Hove because the majority of the facilities were situated on the city's side of the boundary and therefore maintained by the council.
- 10.11 The Head of Law advised that the recommendations asked the Committee to consider whether to support a review and a survey; in light of the comments made, the recommendations would be amended to reflect the Committee's views. He read out the amended recommendations, which were then circulated to the Committee.
- 10.12 **RESOLVED** - That Governance Committee:

- (a) Notes the latest advice and guidance from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the policy and procedures for principal area boundary reviews in general, and for Saltdean in particular.
- ~~(b) Considers whether to support a boundary review at Saltdean and, if so, whether to recommend a survey of the residents of Saltdean to gauge local support.~~
- ~~(c) Refers the matter to Cabinet with recommendations.~~
- (b) Supports in principle the carrying out of a survey and review of the boundary at Saltdean.**
- (c) Recommends to the Cabinet that the council agrees to support a boundary review and undertake a survey of local people on condition that:**
 - (i) the proposal is agreed by East Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council;**
 - (ii) the cost of the survey and associated tasks is identified and agreed between the three authorities (including the sharing of the costs).**
- (d) Officers are given delegated powers, subject to conditions in (c) (i) and (ii) above, to agree the survey questions after consulting Group Leaders.**

