

**COUNCIL BUSINESS
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

14TH MARCH 2013

PRESENT:- Councillors Richard Newman-Thompson (Chairman), Roger Mace (Vice-Chairman), June Ashworth, Melanie Forrest, Janet Hall and Sylvia Rogerson

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Vikki Price

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Richard Tulej	Head of Community Engagement
Anne-Marie Harrison	Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Partnerships)
Debbie Chambers	Democratic Services Manager
Jennifer Milligan	Consultation and Engagement Officer
Peter Baines	Senior Democratic Support Officer

27 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

28 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30 OFFICER ADVICE TO GROUPS OF MEMBERS

The Chief Executive introduced a report on whether to change the current rules about officer advice to groups of members, by amending the constitution.

It was noted that the report was written following discussion with some members about the differences in briefing received by different political groups, depending on if and when information was requested by a political group. Information requested by one group was not routinely passed to others unless there was a request from that group for the information to be shared with others.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Standards Committee be requested to review the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations, which had changed little over the past ten years and was out of date.
- (2) That, as part of the review, the Standards Committee be recommended to ensure that the protocol was clear about how members could request that

information provided to them by officers was also provided to other political groups on the council. This applied to both confidential and non-confidential information.

31 OFFICER ATTENDANCE AT CIVIC EVENTS

The Chief Executive introduced a report to seek advice from members about which civic events required officer attendance.

It was noted that it had become custom and practice for the Chief Executive to support the Mayoralty at a number of events throughout the year, although many were not strictly civic.

During the course of discussion, members expressed a variety of views, ranging from support for the current arrangements to the scaling back of officer attendance at such events; the majority view being that the position of Chief Executive was seen as part of the civic leadership of the council.

It was noted that the Chief Executive did not believe that the current arrangements generated a considerable resource burden.

Resolved:

- (1) That the current arrangements be maintained for officer representation at civic events.
- (2) That the Chief Executive be requested to bring the issue back to a subsequent meeting should the resource burden increase in the future.

32 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION 'KEEPING IT R.E.A.L.' PROGRAMME.

The Head of Community Engagement introduced a summary report on the Keeping it REAL (Responsive, Efficient, Accountable and Local) programme, in the course of which the Local Government Association had provided support to develop city councillors' community leadership work.

The report asked members to consider whether they wished to carry out more joint work with officers on community leadership. In the course of discussing that question, a number of councillors reported that they had encountered difficulties, during the course of ward work, in trying to obtain information from members and officers at Lancashire County Council.

Members also discussed the need for training to be provided on effective time management, to improve members' ability to carry out a strong community leadership role. Councillors also discussed the importance of carrying out exit interviews with members who chose not to stand at future elections. It was thought that this may provide an insight into the barriers which prevent people from becoming more effective community leaders.

It was noted that an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group "Barriers to Being a Councillor"

had recommended that exit interviews be carried out with councillors who chose not to stand for re-election and the Democratic Services Manager agreed to find out whether exit interviews had been undertaken prior to the 2011 city council elections and, if so, what information had been gathered from the interviews.

Resolved:

- (1) That an item be referred to the next meeting of the Three Tier Forum on improving the working relationship between city councillors and members and officers of Lancashire County Council;
- (2) That officers find out whether exit-interviews were ever carried out with city councillors who chose not to stand for re-election in 2011;
- (3) That Democratic Services be requested to look into arranging training for members on effective time management;
- (4) That the summary report of the Keeping it REAL project be noted.

33 ELECTORAL REVIEW – WARDING PATTERNS (Pages 5 - 7)

The Democratic Services Manager introduced a report on the next stage of the electoral review of the district, and asked members whether the council should make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on its draft warding patterns for Lancaster City Council.

It was noted that the council had received a number of submissions from local parish councils subsequent to the agenda being published, and these were circulated at the meeting and are appended to the minutes. The Democratic Services Manager reported that whilst the LGBCE was consulting on the current proposals, they had stressed that responses which opposed their draft recommendations should suggest an alternative arrangement, backed by evidence.

(The meeting adjourned at 7:25pm and reconvened at 7.29pm.)

Resolved:

- (1) That the views expressed by Carnforth Town Council and Warton Parish Council, opposing the proposal to include Warton with Carnforth in a three member ward, be endorsed.
- (2) That the city council's response should state that a boundary between Carnforth and Warton should be drawn in such a way that the number of electors in each ward allows for a one member ward for Warton, and a two member ward for Carnforth, rather than one three member Carnforth and Warton ward as shown in the LGBCE's proposals.
- (3) That the view expressed by Morecambe Town Council, that Morecambe and Heysham would be under represented by the proposals, be endorsed and included in the city council's response.

34 CONSTITUTION - PROTOCOL ON PUBLICITY FOR COMPLAINTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Democratic Services Manager introduced a report about a revised draft protocol, referred from the Standards Committee, which concerned members who were the subject of, or aware of, an alleged breach of the code of conduct.

Resolved:

That the revised protocol be approved to replace the obsolete version in part 7, section 4 of the Lancaster City Council Constitution.

35 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

There were no appointments to committees or changes to membership.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7:35pm)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Peter Baines, Democratic Services - 01524 582074 or email pbaines@lancaster.gov.uk**

Views passed to Lancaster City Council from Town and Parish Councils:-**Warton Parish Council**

Warton Parish Council wish to object to the proposal that the existing Warton Ward be combined with Carnforth Ward. Councillors feel that because of its rural nature the ward best fits as at present with the villages to the north of Carnforth rather than with Carnforth urban area with which it has little or no similarity.

Councillors were particularly worried and annoyed to hear that the changes have been proposed purely to even up the workloads of district councillors putting the convenience of those councillors before the electors. As our current district councillor serves our ward well and at no time has complained about her workload we see no reason to change. Particularly as the proposal would see the ward lose the services of a single dedicated councillor to be replaced by any one of three representing Carnforth ward.

Councillors hope that Lancaster City Council will oppose this particular proposal in any submission made to the Review Body.

Carnforth Town Council

Carnforth Town Council is very concerned by the Local Government Boundary Commission Proposals for warding arrangements in Lancaster, particularly as they relate to Carnforth, Bolton-le-Sands and Warton.

Carnforth Town Council had hoped that the LGBCE would have used this review to right the wrong they committed at the last review by cutting off part of Carnforth Town and lumping it in with Bolton-le-Sands, much to the annoyance of several hundred electors from Crag Bank.

To this end, CTC submitted detailed proposals and arguments to the LGBCE – and we were surprised that there were no representations from City Council on this subject.

When we read the draft proposals, the Council was deeply disappointed that their arguments had been brushed aside and then aghast that the LGBCE have gone further – not only taking *more* from Crag Bank, but putting the rump of Carnforth in with Warton!

Carnforth Town Council believes that this is a travesty of local democracy and calls on Lancaster City Council, its leaders and its political parties to respond to these proposals and oppose them in the strongest terms.

We have made a detailed submission to the consultation arguing that the process is flawed and should be started again on different principles.

The Council looks forward to hearing your response.

Please let me know if you would like any further information or would like to see our objections.

Morecambe Town Council's Boundary Review Working Group's recommendations to Council (Morecambe Town Council meets tonight, 14 March 2013):

(1) That this Council makes the following observations to the Local Government Boundary Commission:

(a) With regard to the proposals as they would affect the whole Lancaster City Council Area:

- The proposals claim to seek a balance in population levels; however they do not appear to have taken into account major residential planning permissions that have been granted and developments that may take place due to forthcoming road development and major government energy policy decisions. For this reason the Council believes the proposed boundary changes are flawed and may require significant revision in the near future.
- Morecambe and Heysham would be under represented as there would be fewer councillors per head of population in the Morecambe and Heysham urban area compared to the Lancaster urban area i.e. 24 councillors in Lancaster, 20 in Morecambe and 16 in rural areas. This is surely unfair towards the Council Tax payers of Morecambe and Heysham as they would be clearly under represented compared to Lancaster. This appears to have been caused by giving more representation to the students at Lancaster University who are in temporary accommodation and do not pay Council Tax.
- The extension of Skerton into Torrisholme and the Parish of Heaton with Oxcliffe will be seen by residents as wholly unacceptable, as these areas have regarded themselves as part of Morecambe for many decades. Skerton wards rate highly on national ward deprivation levels with commensurate lower property values and higher insurance premiums. The boundaries are also poorly defined and will lead to confusion over ward representation.

(b) With regard to the proposals as they would affect the Morecambe Town Council Area:

- Councillors have established relationships with Local communities over a number of years, and the proposals within the Morecambe Town Council part of the district would divide existing communities, which could result in loss of community identity and even loss of property value, and this Council believes that Communities should matter more than simply numbers.
- The alterations to the Bare and Torrisholme boundaries as proposed are both illogical and ill defined. The existing railway boundary is a clear and unambiguous divide which clearly represents existing communities. The proposals would clearly divide this existing community and lead to

confusion over ward boundary representation and resistance to the draft proposals from residents.

- The proposed changes to the Poulton and Torrisholme boundaries are a retrograde step, as they would remove from the ward a significant level of mixed good quality residential development. This would result in the new Poulton ward being regarded as a more disadvantaged area together with having reduced councillor representation, together with potential reputational decline resulting in similar problems that occur in the West End of Morecambe.
 - The proposals would result in the boundaries for City Council wards and some Town Council wards not being the same e.g. Poulton, Bare and Torrisholme. This will lead to confusion amongst residents, and this Council would urge the ward boundaries of the Town Council to mirror those of the City Council. For example some electors will be in the Bare South Ward for the Town Council and Poulton on the City Council.
 - The proposals for Morecambe are inconsistent and do not appear to equalise/enhance councillor:elector ratios. Indeed, there would be three wards on the Town Council where representation would be significantly less than 1:1000.
 - The Town Council believes that across the political spectrum there is agreement that the proposals are wholly inappropriate and even morally wrong, whereby significant changes have to be proposed primarily because of the effect of Lancaster University students which would create unfair representative issues for electors of Morecambe and Heysham.
- (2) That the public be encouraged to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission expressing their dissatisfaction with the proposals and that the Town Council actively encourages the public to write through a stand in the Arndale Centre and local shops/community buildings in the days leading up to the closing date for submissions of 18th March.