

Subject to approval at the next meeting

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

20 March 2014 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors Gammon (Chairman), L Brown (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Brooks, Dendle and Squires (Substituting for Cllr Northeast)

[Note: Councillor Dendle was absent from the meeting during minute 23]

Councillors English, Haymes and Mrs Oakley were also present for all or part of the meeting.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors, Mrs Brown, Oppler & Northeast.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

22. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PRESENTATIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF FELPHAM, FORD, MIDDLETON-ON-SEA AND YAPTON PARISH COUNCILS

The Chairman introduced the item on the Community Governance Review by welcoming the representatives from the Parish Councils of Felpham, Middleton-on-Sea and Yapton who had attended the meeting to present/defend proposals for change to the parish boundaries as part of the Community Governance Review process.

The Head of Policy & Partnerships stated that, at this stage of the review, the Committee would gather evidence and listen to the proposals put forward by the Parish Councils. It was explained that this meeting would provide the opportunity for the Committee to question representatives from all the Parishes affected by the proposals. It was emphasised that, as part of the review process, Arun District Council would consult with the public and other interested parties for their views on suggested boundary changes and a final decision on the review would not be made until the Full Council meeting on 5th November 2014.

Proposal A – Proposal from Yapton Parish Council affecting Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

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The Council had received a parish boundary change proposal from Yapton Parish Council that would affect the parish of Middleton-on-Sea. The Clerk to Yapton Parish Council stated that Yapton was seeking to have the parish boundary with Middleton-on-Sea amended. This would mean that in the future residents in the Flansham hamlet would have access to Yapton without passing through Middleton-on-Sea Parish. This would realign the Parish Boundary so that it was coterminous with the A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton Road eastwards as far as the northern junction with Yapton Road (known as Comet Corner).

The reasons for Yapton Parish Council's Boundary change proposal was outlined as follows:

- At its meeting on 12 March 2012 Yapton Parish Council received a petition signed by the residents of Hoe Lane. This petition called on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to return the hamlet of Flansham ward to Yapton for District Council electoral purposes. 15 letters and e-mails were also received by the Council from individual residents in support of the proposal. It was stated that Flansham Residents' Association supported Yapton Parish Council's suggested boundary change.
- In changing the parish boundary with Middleton-on-Sea the "people's choice" would be reflected in line with Government guidance as residents of Hoe Lane had strongly expressed their wish to remain within the Yapton Parish boundary and represented by the District Councillors for the Yapton ward and the County Councillor for Middleton (includes Yapton division).

Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council responded to Yapton Parish Council's proposal as follows:

- Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council looked at this proposal on the 15th January 2014 and unanimously agreed that the land should be retained within the Middleton Parish boundary.
- Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council stated that they wished to maintain the boundary in the current position as the proposed change had the potential to affect many persons if control over the area was not retained.
- Reasons for wanting no change to the existing boundary were outlined as:
 1. At the north east corner and adjacent to the Rye bank Rife, a capped off oil well could be subject to fracking and the Parish felt it was important to have a voice and control over the land for this reason.
 2. The Comet Corner Road improvements would be an issue. As all proposals fall within the Parish boundary the residents of Middleton should have a say concerning any future proposals.

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3. The issue of flooding where, on 12th June 2012, upwards of 60 dwellings within the Parish flooded should be considered. 90% of Middleton's surface water goes North from the sea and ends up in the Rye bank Rife at the current Parish boundary. Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council considered the maintenance of this water way, often discussed at Parish Council meetings, of great significance to Middleton. It was reported as vital to Middleton-on-Sea, to retain this waterway within the Parish.

Members of the Committee then put questions to both Middleton-on-Sea and Yapton Parish Councils. Following discussion representatives of the Parish Councils and the Committee agreed that Parish boundaries on rural land normally follow easily identifiable routes along road, railway or rivers. It was noted that the boundary, in this case, would not affect Council Tax on residential properties. However, Members of the Committee were keen to know what the rateable value was of plots of land in the area and requested information on the position of any ecclesiastical boundaries. It was agreed that the Head of Policy & Partnerships would investigate this and provide an answer at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services asked the representatives of Yapton Parish Council whether their Council had undertaken public consultation, prior to their proposed change to the Parish boundary. It was confirmed that no public consultation had taken place prior to the proposed change. The Clerk to the Parish Council of Yapton emphasised that residents of Hoe Lane had presented a petition in support of Yapton Parish Council's proposal.

Proposal B – Proposal from Yapton Parish Council affecting Ford Parish Council.

The Committee then received a parish boundary change proposal from Yapton Parish Council that would affect the Parish of Ford. The Clerk to Yapton Parish Council put forward their request to extend the Yapton Parish Boundary with Ford Parish eastwards incorporating the prospective housing development off Goodhew Close.

Reasons for Yapton Parish Council's proposed boundary change was outlined as follows:

- The Committee was informed that this proposal recognised that the only access to and from the new housing development would be via Goodhew Close in the parish of Yapton and it was felt that it would be less confusing for new residents moving into the new houses if the whole development was in the parish of Yapton instead of being split between two parishes.
- Yapton Parish Council referred to Government guidance that suggests as communities expand, with new housing developments, this could lead to existing parish boundaries becoming unnatural and when this

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occurs a review of parish boundaries provided an opportunity to remove anomalous boundaries as in this instance.

The Chairman informed the Committee that Ford Parish Council had given their apologies for this meeting but had submitted an e-mail in response to Yapton Parish Council's proposal. The Chairman read the e-mail to the committee as follows:

- At the meeting of Ford Parish Council on 18 March 2014 the Community Governance Review was discussed. The Council reviewed the proposal to move the Parish boundary which splits the new "Gleeson" development situated behind Goodhew Close in Yapton. The Council felt that to have the majority of a new development in Yapton and a few houses of the same development falling into the Parish of Ford would be confusing for all. The Council said that it was common sense to have the boundary moved to incorporate the whole of the new development into the Parish of Yapton. Ford Parish Council voted unanimously to support the boundary move.

The Committee noted that both Yapton Parish Council and Ford Parish Council were in agreement with the proposed boundary change.

Proposal C – Proposal from Felpham Parish Council affecting Yapton Parish Council.

The Vice-Chairman of Felpham Parish Council put forward suggestion that the parish boundary with Yapton Parish Council should be realigned with the boundary used for District and County Election purposes.

The reasons for Felpham Parish Council's Boundary change proposal was outlined as follows:

- Properties to the East of the new bypass (in the hamlet of Flansham) were for District and Ward purposes part of Felpham East but for parish purposes were part of Yapton Parish. It was stated that the properties were separated from the main part of Yapton by open farmland with no direct access to Yapton village. Residents were more likely to use the facilities, such as shops, businesses and health services in Felpham rather than Yapton.
- It was pointed out that all the properties in Hoe Lane have a PO22 postcode [Bognor] rather than the Yapton postcode of BN18.
- It was felt that, by moving the Felpham East Ward boundary to the East to align with the Ryebank Rife from the Lidsey Rife until part of it turns Southerly to the A259 (opposite Worms Lane) the properties affected by the proposals would be better placed within the Felpham parish.
- An 1875 map of the area showed that the boundary being requested was in place at this time.
- It was felt that residents of Hoe Lane would be better served by Felpham Parish Council rather than Yapton Parish Council.

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Yapton Parish Council responded to Felpham Parish Council's boundary change proposal as follows:

- The Committee was informed that Yapton Parish Council did not agree with their proposal stating that Flansham Residents Association did not support Felpham Parish Council's recommendations and the association had written to Felpham Parish Council requesting that they withdraw their submission to the Community Governance Review.
- Until the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review in 2002 the hamlet of Flansham (Hoe Lane) had always been warded as part of Yapton for District and County Council electoral purposes. After the 2002 review there was an anomaly where the residents that live in Hoe Lane vote for their ward representative on Yapton Parish Council but for the District and County elections must vote for candidates that represent the Felpham ward.
- The residents of Hoe Lane felt strongly that they have a closer identity with the rural village of Yapton with its agricultural outskirts rather than the more urban environment of Felpham. This had been evidenced with a petition and received letters.
- For planning purposes, including the Neighbourhood Plan, residents of Hoe Lane felt a closer association with rural Yapton rather than the Felpham conurbation.

In discussing the proposed boundary change Members of the Committee questioned both Felpham and Yapton Parish Councils. A map of the area was viewed and it was noted that the proposed boundary change covered a large area and affected more than the region affecting the residents of Flansham. It was noted that a number of parish boundaries were no longer coterminous with District and County boundaries across the area, Littlehampton was used as an example. It was pointed out that this Community Governance Review would consider Parish Boundaries and not District and County ward boundaries.

The Head of Democratic Services asked the representatives of Felpham Parish Council whether their Council had undertaken public consultation, prior to their proposed change to the Parish boundary. It was confirmed that no public consultation had taken place prior to the proposed change.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Council for their proposals and views on the proposed changes. It was noted that Arun District Council would, as part of the next stage of the review, hold a period of consultation seeking the views of residents and other interested parties. The outcomes of this consultation would be reported to the Electoral Review Sub-Committee Meeting on 24 July 2014.

23. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION – REVIEW OF ANNUAL CANVASS

The Head of Democratic Services provided the Committee with an update on Electoral Registration and an initial review of the key outcomes of the Annual Canvass.

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It was noted that the 2013/14 canvass had now been completed and the Register of Electors was published on 17 February 2014 to meet the statutory timetable.

Members were reminded that the Council had approved additional funding for this canvass of £20,000 to enable targeted work to increase the response rates ahead of the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) later this year. It was reported that this work had been successful with a final response rate of 89.5%, a 7% increase on 2012/13. The Committee was informed that both the Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Executive were proud of the team for all their efforts in achieving this result, especially as the original aim had been a 2.5% increase which was clearly exceeded.

Members were informed that in preparation for the introduction of IER the Cabinet Office would allocate funding to Electoral Registration Officers to ensure that the burden of this major change would be met by Government and not the local authority. In addition, it was noted, that for 2014/15 local authorities would receive an extra Cabinet Office grant for the purpose of maximising registration. It was noted that the Council's Electoral Services team would use this funding to target underrepresented groups, non-responding properties and individual electors to see if the registration rate could be further increased.

Following questions from the Committee which were responded to by the Head of Democratic Services it was confirmed that a Members Briefing would be arranged during May when key highlights from the canvass and the outcome of maximising registration work could be presented. It was noted that the briefing would also explain the changes to IER ahead of the implementation date of 10 June 2014.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Democratic Services for the informative update and closed the meeting.

(The meeting concluded at 19.05pm)