

Subject to approval at the next meeting

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

18 September 2014 at 6.00pm

Present:- Councillors Gammon (Chairman), L Brown (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Brooks, Mrs Brown and Wensley [*substituting for Councillor Dendle*].

Councillors English, Haymes and Mrs Oakley were also present for Minutes 6 to 9.

6. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Dendle, who was substituted by Councillor Wensley.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

8. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2014 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS TO FULL COUNCIL

In presenting his report, the Head of Policy and Partnerships explained that this was the final stage of the community governance review process with the Sub-Committee being asked to make recommendations to Full Council. He also reminded Members of the background to this review and the basis of the three proposals under consideration, namely:

- Proposal 1 : Request by Yapton Parish Council to move their boundary with Ford Parish Council eastwards to encompass the new housing development due to be built off Goodhew Close.
- Proposal 2 : Request by Yapton Parish Council to align the southern boundary of their parish with Middleton to the line of the A259.
- Proposal 3 : Request by Felpham Parish Council to align their parish boundary with Yapton in line with the District and County electoral boundaries.

Subject to approval at the next meeting

The process taken to this review had included a number of opportunities for views to be presented by the relevant Parish Councils and members of the public. In addition to the presentations made by Felpham, Middleton and Yapton Parish Councils, together with a written submission from Ford Parish Council in the early stages of the review process; the detailed results of the consultation exercise had been reported to the last meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 24 July 2014.

In bringing the review to its conclusion, the Head of Policy and Partnerships explained to Members that they must take into account the evidence in front of them and follow the principles of the guidance produced by the Department of Communities & Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, a copy of which was appended to the report. The report had included options against each proposal for the Sub-Committee's consideration. The Head of Policy and Partnerships also advised that the only appeal process from any decision taken was through Judicial Review. Therefore, the Sub-Committee was asked to give clear reasons for each of the recommendations made.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman explained to the Ward Councillors present that he would be inviting them to give any further views as they considered each of the proposals in turn.

Proposal 1 – Yapton Parish Council's request to move their boundary with Ford Parish Council

The Head of Policy and Partnerships referred Members to the detail of the survey results set out in Appendix 3 to the report. This confirmed that there was support from both parishes to the request by Yapton Parish Council to move their boundary with Ford Parish Council eastwards to encompass the new housing development due to be built off Goodhew Close. No adverse feedback had been received from the consultation, although it had to be recognised that many of the properties had yet to be built/occupied.

Clarification was sought on the boundary line of any realignment and it was agreed that this should form the boundary of the planning application for this development. A question was asked about the current Yapton Neighbourhood Plan and whether this was affected by this proposal. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that this plan had been through the independent examination stage and the examiner had recommended that properties in the eastern part of the Ford parish area should be included within the neighbourhood area so would all be invited to vote in the forthcoming referendum.

On the basis of the evidence presented, Councillor Bower proposed Option 1 from the report, which was seconded by Councillor Mrs Brown.

Subject to approval at the next meeting

On putting this to the vote, the Sub-Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the boundary between Ford and Yapton be altered to include all of the new housing estate that is being built off Goodhew Close in the parish of Yapton, with the boundary line to be based on the boundary of the planning application for this development.

Reason: There was unanimous support from both Ford and Yapton Parish Councils to this proposal and no adverse comment. It also made common sense based on the location of the new development to adjoining properties in the Yapton parish area.

Proposal 2 – Yapton Parish Council’s request to re-align their southern boundary with Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

The Head of Policy and Partnerships referred to the views expressed by each Parish Council, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report. These highlighted the difference of opinion and that Yapton Parish Council’s request had not been supported by Middleton Parish Council. It was noted that no member of the public had made any representations on this proposal.

Councillor Haymes spoke as a Ward Councillor about this proposal which aimed to address anomalies in present arrangements. He referred to there being no further use of the capped oil well which had been referred to in the representations and also to the planned improvement works by West Sussex County to Comet Corner which he believed were separate to this review. Finally, he commented on the points made in the representations about surface water flooding and that he believed that a realignment of the boundary would not be an issue as there would be continued liaison between the two parishes.

Councillor Mrs Oakley spoke as a Ward Councillor, advising that although she was not a Middleton Parish Councillor, she supported the Parish Council’s view that there should be no change to the current boundary.

Councillor English spoke as a Ward Councillor from the neighbouring parish and highlighted that he believed it was wrong to take a decision about any change to the boundary at this stage whilst the design for Comet Corner was still being developed as it was unclear what implications this might bring forward.

The Sub-Committee considered the views expressed by the Ward Councillors and also whether the decision could be deferred until the design scheme had been confirmed for Comet Corner. In reviewing

Subject to approval at the next meeting

the guidance for the timescale for completing a community governance review and receiving further officer advice, the view of the majority of the Sub-Committee was that the decision should be taken now and no deferral considered.

On the basis of the difference of opinion from the consultation exercise, Councillor Wensley proposed option 2 in the officer report, which was seconded by Councillor Brooks. On putting this to the vote, the Sub-Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That there is no change to the parish boundary between Yapton Parish Council and Middleton Parish Council.

Reason – There was insufficient evidence to support a change based on the two Parish Councils having opposing views and no comments in support or against from members of the public.

Proposal 3 – Felpham Parish Council request to realign their parish boundary with Yapton Parish Council

The Head of Policy and Partnerships introduced the approach taken to consultation on this proposal and the findings of this exercise. In this case, there had been consultation with residents of Hoe Lane who would be directly affected by any change as well as with other interested parties and the affected parish councils. The survey results at Appendix 3 highlighted that 96% of residents living in Hoe Lane expressed a view. Comments were received from the Flansham Residents Association, as well as the parish councils and ward councillors. The view of the residents of Hoe Lane was that they wanted to see no change to current arrangements. Views from the other consultees were mixed, each supporting the relevant parish council in which they lived.

Councillor Haymes spoke as a Ward Councillor and gave a history to where the hamlet of Hoe Lane had moved from one county electoral division, district ward and parish to another over the past decade. He supported the Parish Council's view that there should be no change to the current boundary with Hoe Lane remaining in the parish of Yapton.

Councillor English gave his views as a Ward Councillor. He believed that the most recent electoral review of Arun District Council had confirmed that the area should form part of the Felpham parish to retain coterminosity between the district and parish ward boundaries. However, he also accepted the overwhelming request for no change from the residents of Hoe Lane and did not envy the Sub-Committee their decision.

Subject to approval at the next meeting

In discussing the varying views, it was recognised that although it made sense for ward and parish boundaries to be coterminous; it also had to be recognised that a local community must have affinity with the electoral area in which they lived. The residents directly affected by this proposal had made it perfectly clear that they wished no change to current arrangements as they felt aligned with the Yapton parish area. It was felt that this evidence was sufficient to support making no change to current arrangements.

Councillor Bower therefore proposed Option 2 which was seconded by Councillor Mrs Brown. On putting this to the vote, the Sub-Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That there is no change to the parish boundary between Felpham and Yapton Parish Councils.

Reason – The overwhelming view of the community directly affected by this proposal was that they wished to see no change to current arrangements. It was felt that this finding should be given the most weight in the evidence presented.

10. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING STATIONS IN THE ARUN DISTRICT 2013/15 – STAGE 2

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Head of Democratic Services setting out the findings from the final stage of the statutory review of polling districts and polling stations within the Arun District.

In presenting the report, the Head of Democratic Services advised that the proposals being put forward were for limited change to current arrangements. The Returning Officer's view had been that with combined Parliamentary, District and Parish elections due to be held on 7 May 2015, it was important to keep to the familiar for the majority of electors. The report highlighted 3 polling stations where steps were being taken to improve accessibility following feedback from the May 2014 election; and also 3 polling districts where investigations were still underway to identify alternative venues for a polling station as the current location was no longer available.

In discussing the report, a question was asked about the commentary received in response to the consultation exercise. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that all the responses received to the survey undertaken following the European Parliamentary Election in May 2014 had been included in the appendix to the report.

A question was asked about the suitability of the Fire Station as a polling station to cover the Angmering South polling district as it was felt that a venue needed to be identified north of the railway line. The Head of Democratic Services advised that although it was recognised that there were

Subject to approval at the next meeting

some issues with the suitability of these premises, no alternative had been identified in the locality. Further, the venue was a long standing one and well recognised by voters. The Chief Executive supported this assessment. The Head of Democratic Services was asked to keep this polling district under review.

A concern was raised about the confusion some voters faced where they voted at a combined polling station. Feedback was that they were often confused at which station applied to them and the poll card only held limited information, particularly the reference to the polling district abbreviation. The Head of Democratic Services explained that road lists were provided at these polling stations to direct voters and where possible one of the staff would offer a 'meet and greet' service to assist voters. She agreed to review the wording of the poll card, against the legislation, and see whether additional information could be provided beyond the polling district code.

In reviewing options for new polling stations, there was a view that the use of portacabins should not be ruled out, although it was accepted that the accessibility of these needed to be carefully managed based on recent experience.

The Sub-Committee therefore

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL - That

- (1) the Returning Officer's report on Stage 2 of the 2013/15 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations for the Arun District, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed; and
- (2) the use of the polling stations listed in Appendix 1 be agreed for future elections, including the Parliamentary, District and Parish elections to be held on 7 May 2015.

(The meeting concluded at 7.05pm)