

MINUTE EXTRACT

Cabinet Meeting.....4th September 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Local Government Boundary Review Request

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on a Local Government Boundary Review Request. A request had been received from Yarm Town Council (YTC) for Stockton Borough Council to invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to carry out a principal area boundary review in light of the recent parish poll.

A parish poll could be called for at a parish meeting, which was a meeting of the local government electors for a parish. The Chairman of the parish council for the parish, was entitled to attend a parish meeting and to preside as Chair.

The poll was a poll of the local government electors of the parish and if requested, the Chairman of the parish meeting must provide the Borough Council's Returning Officer with the necessary details to allow a notice of poll to be given and for the poll to be held.

The parish council was responsible for the costs of the poll.

The Borough Council had no other role or responsibility in relation to a parish poll, which was not legally binding on the Borough Council or the parish Council.

At the Yarm Parish Assembly meeting held on 22 April 2014, a parish poll was requested in relation to the following question:-

"Do the electors of Yarm wish to be removed from the control and administration of Stockton Borough Council and become the responsibility of North Yorkshire County Council and Hambleton District Council?"

A parish poll was subsequently held on 27 May 2014. The result of the poll was as follows:-

Answering Yes to the (above) question	1465 votes
Answering No to the question	177 votes
Rejected votes	2

The total number of ballot papers issued was 1644, with an electorate of 6745, and a turnout of 24.37%.

Attached to the report was a summary explanatory note regarding principal area boundary reviews. This was based on technical guidance produced by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Electoral Equality/Convenient and Effective Local Government).

The following points were of particular importance:-

The LGBCE believed that local authorities should be the primary instigators of a principal area boundary review and that they would only normally undertake such a review where there was agreement between all the principal councils potentially directly affected (in this instance, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Hambleton District Council and North Yorkshire County Council).

The LGBCE would need to be satisfied that any proposed change meets their statutory and other criteria. In particular specific evidence would be required to demonstrate that the proposal would satisfy the need to secure effective and convenient local government; and the need to reflect identities and interests of local communities.

In addition, the LGBCE would expect to see evidence of confidence that the change would maintain or improve and sustain value for money in the effectiveness of local government.

The principal councils concerned would be expected to satisfy themselves and their council tax payers that the financial consequences of the proposal were acceptable, leading to the sustained viability of councils' service provision.

The driver for the change was the outcome of the parish poll in response to the question specified at paragraph 2.1 of the report. There had been no evidence of any assessment of a case being made by the campaigners set against the criteria outlined, which would be expected prior to any invitation being made to the LGBCE.

Since the parish poll there had been communication with a Yarm GP expressing concern over the potential implications on access to health services for residents, should such boundary changes take place. There were potential significant implications across a range of public services e.g. fire, police, public health as well as Local Authority services where provision would differ significantly i.e. SBC had prioritised weekly refuse collections to name but a few. There were also implications for services provided by the Council which would suffer from diseconomies of scale and would have to be reconfigured.

Any assessment and impact analysis that was undertaken would need to be thorough and detailed across all public services. Indeed it would also need to cover economic growth given the boundaries and architecture of Local Enterprise Partnerships and of future European funding programmes which would also be impacted.

There was no provision in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for this work, nor was it identified within the Council's agreed Council Plan.

Such work would be time consuming and resource intensive requiring a budget of a minimum of £100,000 to fund either additional temporary staff, or consultants to carry out the detailed assessment and impact analysis and a subsequent borough wide consultation.

RECOMMENDED to Council that this Council does not invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a principal area boundary review nor will it carry out any further action or work on this proposal.