

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Electoral Review Sub-Committee**
held on Wednesday, 31st January, 2024 in Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor C Browne (Vice-Chair)

Councillors J Clowes, C O'Leary, F Wilson, S Edgar (for Cllr Pearson) and
R Vernon (for Cllr Bratherton)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Nick Billington, Economic Research and Intelligence Officer
Peter Jones, Senior Lawyer
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services
Laura Bateman, Senior Project Officer
Diane Barnard, Electoral Services Manager
Leanne Austin, Electoral Services Officer

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors S Bennett-Wake, L Braithwaite, M Brooks, L Buchanan,
D Edwardes, K Edwards, S Holland, J Place, B Puddicombe and J Snowball

APOLOGIES

Councillors J Bratherton and J Pearson

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2023 be approved as
a correct record.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKING / OPEN SESSION

Simona Garner, Clerk to Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council, voiced
the Parish Council's objection to any proposal for separate Borough wards
for Shavington and Gresty, citing historical survey evidence that residents
of Gresty identified strongly with Shavington. The Parish Council
supported a single, two-member ward.

Joe Godden commented that some people in the Cross Town and St John's Wood areas of Knutsford did not feel appropriately represented under the present single, three-member ward arrangement. He suggested that Knutsford be divided into a single member ward for Cross Town and St John's Wood and a two member ward for the rest of the town, although he recognised that this would result in the former ward being under-represented and the latter over-represented in terms of the Boundary Commission's electoral equality criterion. At the Chair's request, Mr Billington advised that the extent of the resulting variances made it unlikely that they would be accepted by the Boundary Commission.

15 CHESHIRE EAST ELECTORAL REVIEW - WARDING PROPOSALS

The Sub-Committee considered a report on proposed future warding arrangements for Cheshire East Council, which was in response to an electoral review of Cheshire East by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

In presenting the report, Mr Reed reminded the Sub-Committee that the review was being conducted by the Boundary Commission, and that the Council was being consulted with a view to submitting its own proposals to the Commission. The Sub-Committee was being asked to consider the draft Council proposals and to make recommendations to the Corporate Policy Committee on 13th February 2024. The final approval of the Council's submission would be by full Council on 27th February 2024.

The report set out the Boundary's Commission's timetable for conducting the electoral review. It also set out the criteria that the Commission would apply to its consideration of the future warding arrangements for Cheshire East: electoral equality, community identity, and effective and convenient local government. Any proposals by the Council would need to conform to those criteria.

The Sub-Committee had met informally on a number of occasions between late November and mid-January to consider in detail proposals for future warding. In addition, individual members of the Sub-Committee had consulted informally with local ward members and within their political groups. Local ward members had attended the meetings and had been afforded the opportunity to speak in relation to the warding proposals for their areas.

Appendix 1 to the report included the vast majority of warding proposals upon which informal agreement had been reached. A number of warding proposals remained unresolved, and the options relating to those proposals were set out in Appendix 2. Detailed maps of the proposals were set out in the appendices and large scale printed versions were available at the meeting.

The officers advised that once the Sub-Committee had approved proposals from among the options in Appendix 2, those proposals would

be incorporated into the main set of proposals at Appendix 1 for the Corporate Policy Committee meeting. The officers would also take the opportunity to correct a number of typographical errors that had become apparent in the warding proposals report.

The Sub-Committee was also recommended, for the reasons set out in the report, to seek delegated authority from the Corporate Policy Committee, and then from Council, for the Sub-Committee to make any further changes to the warding proposals following the Corporate Policy Committee and Council meetings, and to respond to any further consultation by the Boundary Commission before or during the second round of consultation between July and October.

The Chair acknowledged the huge amount of work that had been undertaken over the last few weeks and placed on record his thanks to the officers, and in particular to Nick Billington. He also congratulated the Sub-Committee on having secured agreement on the vast majority of warding proposals, with only three areas remaining to be resolved by the day of the meeting.

The Sub-Committee proceeded to consider the proposals set out in the report, including the options for the as yet unresolved areas set out in Appendix 2 relating to Macclesfield and Bollington, Shavington and Rope, and Congleton.

With regard to Knutsford, which was raised under public speaking, the Chair suggested that Mr Godden, who was still present, might wish to work with Mr Billington to see if an appropriate arrangement could be brought forward in time for consideration by the Corporate Policy Committee.

With regard to the optional proposals for Macclesfield, Councillors S Bennett-Wake, L Braithwaite, M Brooks, B Puddicombe and J Snowball spoke as visiting members in support of Option 1 in Appendix 2. Councillor D Edwardes spoke as a visiting member in support of Option 2. Councillors K Edwards and J Place spoke as visiting members in support of the proposed boundary for the Bollington ward under the Macclesfield Option 1 proposal where the ward boundary with Tytherington remained south of the Silk Road.

With regard to the optional proposals for Shavington and Rope, Councillor L Buchanan spoke as a visiting member in support of a single, two-member ward.

Councillor Clowes read out the comments of Councillor M Simon regarding the boundary between the proposed Wistaston and Rope wards. The Chair asked Mr Billington to take away Councillor Simon's comments to ascertain what exactly was being proposed and what the implications might be, and to circulate the results of his analysis to members of the Sub-Committee and the Corporate Policy Committee before the Committee's meeting.

Before the Sub-Committee considered the proposals for Congleton, the Chair reported that Councillor L Smetham had submitted comments, expressing concern about what she referred to as the piecemeal attacks on the edges of her ward, with illogical boundaries not aligning with parishes.

With regard to Congleton, Councillor S Holland spoke as a visiting member against the proposal for three two-member wards. Councillor Clowes reported the comments of Councillor L Wardlaw that she and other Congleton members supported the alternative proposal for two three-member wards.

The Sub-Committee gave detailed consideration to the merits of the various options in Appendix 2 and, following a number of indicative votes and proposed amendments, arrived at a final set of recommendations to the Corporate Policy Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Sub-Committee

1. approves the following proposals on warding for recommendation to the Corporate Policy Committee on 13th February 2024, with a view to these being recommended to Council on 27th February 2024:

- (a) the proposals set out in Appendix 1 in full, and the proposals relating to Gawsworth and Sutton set out in Appendix 2;

- (b) the following proposals set out in Appendix 2:

Macclesfield and Bollington – Option 2 as detailed in the Appendix, subject to the following amendments:

- The whole of the area comprising Polling District 4CBR to be included in the Macclesfield South ward; and
- The whole of the area comprising Polling District 4AF2 to be included in the Macclesfield West ward.

Shavington and Rope – that there be a single, two-member ward as detailed in Appendix 2.

Congleton – that there be two three-member wards as detailed in Appendix 2.

2. agrees to seek delegated authority for the Sub-Committee:

- (a) to make any further required changes to these proposals, and to approve any outstanding proposals and to deal with any matters

which arise, following the Corporate Policy Committee's meeting and prior to the consideration of the proposals by full Council, and also in respect of any outstanding proposals which have not been finalised in time for consideration by Council;

- (b) to make any further changes to the proposals arising from the Council meeting on 27th February, or which become necessary after that meeting; and
- (c) to respond on the Council's behalf to any further informal or formal consultation by the Boundary Commission which relates to the second period of consultation.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.45 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)