

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 26 November 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Sue Alston, Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris, Gill Furniss, Alan Law, Bryan Lodge, Cate McDonald, Pat Midgley, Mick Rooney, Sarah Jane Smalley and Cliff Woodcraft

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Denise Fox.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th September 2014, were approved as a correct record, subject to:-

(a) the removal of Councillor Cate McDonald from the list of Members present at the meeting; and

(b) the amendment of the resolution under paragraph 8.4 in Item 8 – Performance Management for Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – Quarter 1 2014/15, as follows:-

“RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted; and

(b) requests that external contractors, to be considered as part of performance and budget monitoring, be included on the Committee’s Work Programme 2014/15.”

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Public Question regarding Local Area Partnership Working

Mr Nigel Slack raised a question with regard to the validity and effectiveness of the new engagement arrangements with regard to Local Area Partnerships.

The Chair stated that, due to the nature of the question, it would be more pertinent

for Mr Slack to raise this at the meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 27th November 2014.

5.2 Public Question in respect of the Scrutiny Review

Mr Alan Kewley referred to questions he had raised at the last meeting of the Committee on 24th September 2014, expressing his concern at the delay in receiving a formal, written response to the questions, which he had only received the previous day. Mr Kewley indicated that responses to questions raised by members of the public should be provided within a reasonable timescale, following the meeting, particularly as he was acting on behalf of other residents, and needed to share the information with them.

The Chair apologised for the delay and suggested that where formal, written responses to questions raised by members of the public were to be provided, officers should ensure that responses were produced within a more reasonable timescale, such as 10 days following the meeting or as soon after as possible.

5.3 Public Question in respect of Webcasting

Mr Alan Kewley asked whether the City Council was considering introducing webcasting in terms of its public meetings, as being operated by Rotherham MBC.

The Chair stated that, whilst there had been a number of changes in connection with increasing public involvement at meetings, such as members of the public being entitled to carry out recordings of meetings, a response would be provided in terms of the issue of webcasting at the earliest possible opportunity.

6. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SHEFFIELD - UPDATE

6.1 The Director of Policy, Performance and Communications submitted a report providing an update on the Electoral Review of Sheffield being carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, focusing specifically on the consultation on the draft recommendations, which was currently in progress. The report contained, as appendices, details of the comparison of the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations with the City Council's proposals, evidence submitted by members of the public to this Committee, concerning the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for Sheffield, and the Boundary Commission's report – 'New Electoral Arrangements for Sheffield City Council – October 2014'. Additional evidence from members of the public was circulated to Members of the Committee prior to the meeting.

6.2 In addition to the report, James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, and Victoria Penman, Policy and Improvement Officer, gave a presentation on the current position with regard to the review, reporting on the reasons for the review and an overview of the Boundary Commission's proposals and approach to consultation. It was noted that the Boundary Commission had been invited to attend this meeting, but had declined to do so.

6.3 The Committee considered representations from members of the public, as part of

the consultation on the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations, as follows:-

6.3.1 Jack Carrington, Sheffield for Democracy

- An additional element of the Philadelphia box should be moved from the Walkley Ward into the City Ward, namely the Opal 3 Development (primarily international student accommodation), some commercial properties and another nearby residential development with greater ties to Kelham Island
- The 1,760 electors at The Forge should remain in the new City Ward. The primary characteristic of the City Ward was likely to be its relative-transient population, which was a commonality that could form the basis of a community identity although, for obvious reasons, this was harder to be built upon, but should still be recognised. The other end of the proposed Arbourthorne and Park Ward was 2.5 miles away and was itself, 800 metres from Derbyshire. This would not be an appropriate ward to place an incredibly large community of students, in consideration of both the residents and the remainder of the electors in the Arbourthorne and Park Ward, as well as the 1,760 students.
- The Highfield area should not be moved into Arbourthorne and Park, with the City Ward remaining as the likely 'least worst' of its alternative locations. If the Highfield area was moved, the principles of 'natural communities' and 'clear and definable boundaries' would be heavily violated by the Arbourthorne and Park proposals. In addition to the train line (in which there were only two crossings in over a kilometre of boundary, both traffic-orientated) as a clear natural barrier there was also a major road running parallel and a wide boarder of traffic-orientated industrial/commercial estates in-between.
- A unified Broomhall should be created, and moved in with Broomhill. The Springfield estate does have characteristics, community and a catchment area that crosses, what was in context, given the ease and frequency of movement between, a very arbitrary ring-road boundary. However, in order to negate the extent of the above first and third changes, this re-unified Broomhall should be located within the Broomhill and Broomhall Ward to maintain broad parity in elector numbers.

6.3.2 Chris Morgan, Chair of Bradway Action Group

Residents in Bradway, particularly those that had lived in the area for a number of years, felt very strongly that Bradway should be united, in the Dore and Totley Ward, as in the Council's original proposals.

6.3.3 The Reverend Julian Sullivan, St Mary's Church, Bramall Lane

- There had been a lack of consultation on the changes in the Highfield area, which had resulted in the feeling that the wishes of local, long-term residents of the area had been disregarded.

- A sample of local organisations opposed to the changes include Sharrow Community Forum, Creative Industry section of Sharrow, including Portland Works, Harland Café in the John Street triangle, Wolseley Road Mosque, St Mary's Church and Centre, Roshni, Chinese Community Centre and New Era Development Project, and the Shoreham Street Tenants' and Residents' Association. Reference was made to the fact that proposals for boundary change were governed by the principles set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, where it was expected that local authorities should:-
 - (a) respect existing boundaries – this was not the case as Highfield was separated from Arbourthorne by the railway, Queens Road and a wide industrial corridor;
 - (b) secure, effective and convenient local government – this would not be the case as Highfield belonged as part of Sharrow, where its concerns were shared by the wider community;
 - (c) ensure equality of representation – this would not be the case as Highfield would be a minority interest in a relatively monochrome region;
 - (d) reflect identities and interests of local communities – it would not as local people and organisations were unanimous in their opposition to the proposals;
 - (e) set boundaries that were easily identifiable – it has not as it had chosen an arbitrary set of boundaries, which simply divided the community;
 - (f) fix boundaries so as not to break any local ties – this would be the case as many have connections with schools and places of worship, including the Mosque and St Mary's Church;
 - (g) recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the Ward we put forward – this would not be the case as strong, natural boundaries were being ignored completely; and
 - (h) make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests – it has not as it has not consulted on the interests in this area and when invited, had shown no interest in doing so.
- It is the view of the local community that the Council's aims to ensure that each Councillor represented roughly the same number of voters, and that ward boundaries reflected the interests and identities of local communities, has not been achieved. The total number of electors in Highfield was 2,783, of which the majority were students, with 1,156 living in The Forge alone. Students related to the City Centre and certainly not to the Park and Arbourthorne area. An earlier proposal included The Forge in the Central Ward, leaving a total of 1,627 electors in Highfield, of which the majority were

students, with a minority host community. Charlotte Court, Anchor Point and The Anvil accounted for a further 200 electors, and a close analysis will show the majority of dwellings were occupied by students.

- Further work was needed but, if the original proposal to include The Forge was taken into account, with some changes along Cemetery Road and the boundary between Botanical and Broomhill, the proposed inclusion into Arbourthorne may prove unnecessary.

6.3.4 Jean Cromar

- Note and support the Council's concerns regarding the size of the proposed City Ward, but not able to understand why the Commission only took on board the submissions from Broomhall to be kept together, when those of Highfield were ignored, when the arguments were practically identical.
- Support the Council's submission for the student community, especially in The Forge, which accounts for about 40% of the Highfield residents, to be included in the City Ward because of their links with predominantly Hallam University. They have no links with Park and Arbourthorne.
- A number of local community groups in the area knew nothing about the proposal to include Highfield in the proposed Park and Arbourthorne Ward.
- Sharrow Community Forum covered the Highfield area, which was probably about a third of their patch, and they have no connections whatsoever with Arbourthorne. The Forum considered the issue, at short notice, at their AGM last week, where about 40 people were present and not one person Ms Cromar spoke to was in favour of the proposal. The Forum Director requested Ms Cromar to make it clear to the Council that the Forum was against this proposal.
- Reference was made to a message Ms Cromar received from Alan Deadman, former Chair of the Sharrow Community Forum, and organiser of the Sharrow Festival and Sharrow Fringe, which covered Highfield. Mr Deadman felt it was critical for the Creative Industry, based in the John Street triangle, to be included in Sharrow as it had a dynamic relationship to London Road, supporting the music shops in this area.
- Roshni, a support centre for Asian women based on London Road, and who supported many women living in Highfield, was against the proposal.
- In addition, the Wolseley Road Mosque, who had many members in Highfield, were also in objection to this proposal.
- The strong feeling in the community was that they had no connections whatsoever with Park and Arbourthorne, and the main railway line, Queens Road and the industrial corridor, acted as a huge barrier between the communities. Also Park and Arbourthorne were predominantly mono-cultural areas, whereas Highfield has a very diverse community.

- Alternatives being pursued by local residents included looking at the possibility of having Cemetery Road as a boundary and not the river Porter, which stretches from Frog Walk to the ring-road, which would transfer into the proposed Broomhill and Botanicals Ward, which had a variance of -8%. Residents were also looking at working on the southern end of Nether Edge and were working on the numbers to see if there could be movement here to keep Highfield in the proposed Sharrow and Nether Edge Ward.
- The current proposals would result in community groups having to liaise with six Councillors, as opposed to three, when raising any issues of concern.

6.3.5 *Eunice Batty, Shoreham Street TARA*

- Endorsed the comments made by the Reverend Julian Sullivan and Jean Cromar.
- In her role in the local community, and as a resident in the area for 65 years, she was well aware of the strength of feeling against the proposal, mainly on the basis that the area had no links at all with Park and Arbourthorne.
- It would result in a number of people having a different Member of Parliament.
- It would result in some residents having been in five different Council wards over the years.

6.3.6 *Mohammed Nazir*

- A number of the Muslim residents in the area had complained that they had not been consulted on the proposals.
- All the links and contacts of the Muslim community were with Sharrow and Nether Edge, and there were no links at all with Park and Arbourthorne.

6.3.7 *Councillor Jillian Creasy*

Referred to representations submitted direct to the Boundary Commission by Mike Fitter, resident of Broomhall, indicating that due to similarities in housing tenure and population mix, as well as sharing the same school as the rest of Broomhall, the main aim of the Broomhall Group of Groups was to keep the Springfield estate and Springfield School as part of the ward that includes Broomhall.

6.3.8 *Alan Kewley, Bradway Action Group*

- There had not been sufficient consultation in terms of the proposed changes affecting Bradway in the last electoral review.
- Concerned at the Boundary Commission's refusal to accept the Council's

draft proposals regarding Bradway.

- Concern that Bradway would not only be in two Council wards, but also in two different Local Area Partnership areas, and that representatives of community groups and local residents would need to discuss any issues of concerns with two sets of Ward Councillors.
- Will the Council be making representations to the Boundary Commission on the draft proposals?

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The number of electors in Council wards was based on the electoral register.
- Whilst the Council aimed for a tolerance level for Council wards of plus or minus 5% in order to futureproof the boundaries, based on the City ward average, the Boundary Commission used a statutory tolerance level of plus or minus 10%. They sought to develop wards which had an electorate as close as possible to the ward average.
- In terms of the proposed Park and Arbourthorne Ward, it had not been easy to find a suitable solution. The Council had considered representations made by residents of Highfield and was well aware of their concerns with regard to the proposed changes. Every effort had been made in terms of looking at alternative options, but there had been significant constraints in terms of what changes could be made. The Council had asked if it would be possible to create two, two Member wards, but this had not been considered possible. The Council was only a consultee in this process, and not the decision-maker. The final decision was to be made by the Boundary Commission, and the Council would continue to make representations to the Commission, and continue dialogue with the local community.

6.5 Members of the Committee also made the following comments:-

- Although not the decision-maker in this process, the Council was a very powerful consultee and should emphasise the proposals made and put forward strong recommendations to the Boundary Commission.
- All boundary reviews involved change, and communities were always concerned about this change. It was not always possible to find a solution that suited everyone.
- The Council put forward a proposal in terms of the Bradway area, which had been rejected by the Boundary Commission. Whilst no consolation to the residents of Bradway, there were a number of communities which had been split across different Council wards, as part of the Boundary Commission's recommendations, which the Council would have to work with.
- Councillors often found themselves in the position of having wards with

different communities and sought to represent all their communities.

6.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses provided to the questions raised;
- (b) approves the contents of the report now submitted; and
- (c) requests that:-
 - (i) the Council's draft recommendations, as set out in the report now submitted, and incorporating the comments and views made at this meeting, be forwarded to the Boundary Commission; and
 - (ii) arrangements be made for officers to meet with representatives of the Highfield community and local Councillors for the affected Wards, to look further at the possibility of Sharrow and Highfield remaining with Sharrow and, if this was not a possibility, to provide a clear explanation to the local community on the reasons why.

7. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORTING PROCESS

7.1 The Head of Elections, Equalities and Involvement submitted a report on a proposed change to the annual scrutiny reporting process.

7.2 The report indicated that, as the six-monthly scrutiny update had historically been presented to the January full Council meeting, details on scrutiny activity for the period January to April were currently not reported anywhere. It had therefore been proposed that, a more appropriate way to comprehensively report scrutiny activity and achievements was to produce an annual scrutiny report at the end of each Municipal Year, to be presented to full Council, at its first appropriate meeting of the new Municipal Year.

7.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted; and
- (b) approves the proposed change in terms of the annual scrutiny reporting process, as detailed in the report now submitted.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

8.1 The Head of Elections, Equalities and Involvement submitted a report containing the Work Programme for the Committee for 2014/15.

8.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer, Emily Standbrook-Shaw, stated that, following comments raised at the last meeting, she would be writing to Members of the Committee, inviting comments on the format and contents of the budget monitoring report to be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in January 2015.

8.3 RESOLVED: That the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made, be noted.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 28th January 2015, at 4.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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