

Appendix A - Transcript of Richard Buck's presentation on the Electoral Review in South Bucks

South Bucks District Council Electoral review briefing

Parish briefing, 25 July 2013

About us

- We are independent of Government and political parties, and directly accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee
- We are responsible for reviewing local authority electoral arrangements, administrative boundaries and structure
- Our recommendations for this review will be implemented by Parliament

Purpose of Presentation

- Explain the Review Process
 - Our statutory criteria
 - How we develop our recommendations
 - Consultation – involvement

What you can expect from us and how we can assist you

- Why are we conducting an electoral review of South Bucks?
- Council requested review to explore appropriate council size for South Bucks
- Our aim is to try to ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.
- 15% of wards in South Bucks have an electoral variance of more than 10% of the average. Burnham Beeches ward has 20% fewer electors than the district average

Scope of the review

- Review will decide the pattern of wards for the entire district – not just wards where there are levels of electoral inequality
- We will decide:
 - Total number of councillors (council size)
 - Number of wards
 - Names of wards
 - Boundaries of wards

Statutory criteria

- Electoral equality
 - Optimum number of electors per councillor
 - Five year forecast
 - In time for next election
 - Community identity
 - Parishes as building blocks
 - Strong boundaries
 - Public facilities
 - Focus on community interaction
 - Effective and convenient local government

- Coherent wards with good internal transport links

What we cannot consider

- Parliamentary constituency boundaries, which are drawn by the Boundary Commission for England
- Current district wards
- Local political implications of recommendations
- School catchment areas
- Postcodes or addresses
- Polling districts

Rules relating to parishes

- We cannot create or abolish parishes, or amend their boundaries
- If we divide a parish between district wards, we must create parish wards
- We can change parish electoral arrangements only as a direct consequence of our district ward proposals

Council size: The Commission's approach

- Starting point of review is the optimum councillor: elector ratio (councillors divided by electorate)
- Once everyone knows the optimum councillor: elector ratio, we can all work from the same starting point
 - Commission will make final decision on council size

Review process

Preliminary stage: Council size discussion

- Do you have the right council size?
- What are the demands of time on elected members?
Could the council operate more effectively with a different number?
- Opportunity for council to consider political management and governance
- Consideration of members representative role
- Effective representation of constituents
- Council size final submission: July 2013
- Council size consultation: 3 Sept – 14 October 2013
- Consultation on warding patterns (10 weeks)
- Invite warding patterns from council, public, parish councils, everybody who takes an interest
- Welcome proposals for whole district or just a few parishes
- Commission tours area
- Commission publishes draft recommendations
 - Posters provided to parish councils to publicise review
- Open consultation on draft recommendations (10 – 12 weeks)
- Commission publishes final recommendations
- Final recommendations will be implemented by order in the Houses of Parliament

Parish councils' input

- Tell us what you think
 - Explain how the proposed ward pattern reflects community identity
 - Consider ward names and patterns
 - Give evidence of how recommendations would impact your communities
 - We don't expect a district-wide scheme but remember there may be knock-on effects to proposals
- Talk to residents and publicise the review
 - We will provide all parishes with posters

Effective Representations

- Representations which support are as important as those which oppose
- Representations will be judged on the quality of argument and evidence presented
- Effective representations will:
 - Suggest an alternative as well as setting out an objection
 - Take account of statutory requirements
 - Consider consequences of alternative across widest possible area
 - Be evidence based

What characterises a good review

- Detailed rationale for council size
- Accurate electorate figures and robust methodology when forecasting expected growth
- Scheme coming forward which gives good electoral equality while balancing other statutory criteria, has cross-party support, has been consulted on locally
- Highly important to involve as many groups/individuals as possible at as early a stage as possible
- Where you cannot secure consensus across a whole scheme, tell us where there is agreement
- Representations based on evidence, not just assertion

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