



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Wednesday 17 October 2018 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Agha, Farah, Colwill, Hirani, Krupa Sheth and Tatler

Also present: Councillors Kabir, Aden, S Choudhary, Kansagra, A Choudry, Hector, Long, Ezeajughi and Dar

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Local Government Boundary Review - Draft Warding Pattern Proposals**

The Chair provided a brief introduction to the report, noting that the Council at its meeting on 9 July 2018 had unanimously supported a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) which proposed a future council size of 57 councillors - a reduction of six councillors from the current council size of 63. The LGBCE subsequently announced in August 2018 that it was minded to recommend a council size of 57 councillors. The LGBCE was now consulting on ward patterns to match this reduced council size and the report before the committee set out two proposals developed by council officers for members' consideration. Carolyn Downs (Chief Executive of the Council) highlighted that the council was not obliged to make a submission regarding future ward boundaries but noted that if a proposal could be agreed and supported by members, it represented an opportunity to influence the final LGBCE recommendation.

Drawing members' attention to the detail of the proposals, Carolyn Downs advised that proposal one comprised 19 wards, each to be represented by three councillors, whilst proposal two comprised 20 wards, with 17 of those to be represented by three councillors and the remaining three wards to be represented by two councillors. Thomas Cattermole (Head of Executive and Member Services) emphasised that both proposals met the statutory criteria which included ensuring that: each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters; arrangements avoid splitting local ties; boundaries are easily identifiable; and, wards can be

represented effectively. In developing the proposals officers had taken into account projected population figures, geographic factors and community identities. Officers had been mindful of LGBCE guidance which stated that existing boundaries and ward names should be used where possible.

The Chair invited comments and contributions from the audience.

Councillor A Choudry stated that the proposed Neasden Ward (ward number 16) included in both proposals did not incorporate the centre of the Neasden Community which was the area adjacent to The Crest Academy. He strongly advocated for a revision of the boundaries for Neasden Ward and further expressed that the proposed Dollis Hill ward would be better named Gladstone Ward. Councillor A Choudry advised that he disagreed with the suggested dissolution and division of the current Dudden Hill Ward.

Addressing the committee, Councillor S Choudhary advised that he spoke with the support of his ward councillor colleagues and expressed concern that the Barnhill community had been overlooked and its long history disregarded. Noting that the proposed Neasden Ward incorporated parts of the existing Barnhill Ward, Councillor S Choudhary stated that the Neasden Ward did not accord with the LGBCE criteria, there being no natural boundary, cohesive community identity, or landmark included. Furthermore, the obstacle of the North Circular Road which separated one section of the ward from another appeared to have been ignored. In concluding his statement, Councillor S Choudhary emphasised that the proposals should not disrupt the established community identity of the Barnhill area.

Councillor Long expressed concerns regarding the proposed Neasden Ward, stating that it failed to fully encompass the existing Neasden community. If this ward was kept in the council submission unrevised, Councillor Long suggested it be renamed.

Support was voiced for proposal one by Councillors Aden and Ezeajughi: the former advocating for three member wards to enable greater diversity of representation; and, the latter stating that this proposal better reflected the natural boundaries of the borough.

Councillor Hector expressed surprise that both proposals removed Kensal Green and Dudden Hill ward completely.

Councillor Kansagra expressed support for the logic of the proposed Kenton Ward but stated that the Conservative Party intended to submit separate proposals to the LGBCE which would be based on a three member ward configuration and would incorporate the creation of a Preston North and Preston South ward.

In response to the comments made, Carolyn Downs advised members to meet directly with officers to assist in formulating alternative suggestions to contribute to the council's proposals. Refined proposals would then be submitted to the forthcoming meeting of the General Purposes Committee, scheduled for 31 October 2018, for further consideration and agreement. Members were urged to focus on ensuring proposals reflected appropriate electoral representation and flexibility was encouraged with regard to the number of members representing each ward if this enabled the creation of wards that better mirrored community identities.

The Chair then welcomed comments and questions from the committee. Members recognised the significant work involved in designing both proposals and expressed a range of views in the subsequent discussion. Support was expressed for a proposal based on three member ward representation, as it was felt that this was a more accessible model for members of the public to engage with. Other members of the committee advocated for smaller wards which would provide closer representation for distinct community identities. It was noted that the projected population figures took into account the developments for which planning permission had already been granted. However, it was noted that there was a significant degree of regeneration and development across the borough and it was queried whether this would demand a further review of ward boundaries in the near future.

Matthew Willis (Principal Electoral Services Manager) confirmed that the legislation only allowed developments for which planning permission had been granted to be included in population projections; however, the boundary review was undertaken with the intention of establishing ward boundaries suitable for the next 10 to 20 years. The Chair highlighted that the regeneration projects across the borough were intended to be delivered over a period of years, and many would not be in place by the time that the new proposed boundaries were due to be implemented.

RESOLVED:

That the Chief Executive be authorised to make changes to the proposed ward patterns and names on behalf of the Council for further consideration by the General Purposes Committee on 31 October 2018 in view of a final submission to the LG BCE by 5 November 2018.

5. Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

The committee made no appointments to sub-committees or outside bodies.

6. Any other urgent business

None.

7. Exclusion of Press and Public

The committee did not consider any information that was exempt from publication under schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting closed at 5.57 pm

M BUTT
Chair