

GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA

for the

COUNCIL MEETING

28 November 2007

at 7.00 pm

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PLEASE TELEPHONE: 01493 846325**

COUNCIL

To be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Great Yarmouth
on Wednesday, 28 November 2007 at 7.00 pm

AGENDA

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members must declare any personal interests in any items on the agenda and state whether they are also prejudicial interests. In the case of personal non prejudicial interests the Member may speak and vote on the matter. In the case of personal prejudicial interests the Member must leave the room while the matter is discussed.

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

As agreed at the meeting on the 1 November 2007, Council will be asked to review the options for submission to the Boundary Committee.

The following documents are attached:-

- ... (a) The Managing Director's update report is attached (pages 1 - 4).
- ... (b) The notes of the meeting of the Local Government Re-organisation Working Group held on the 7 November 2007 are attached (pages 5 - 6).

Further updates will be given at the meeting.

2. REPORTS TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION

(a) Shoreline Management Plan

To consider the Head of Regeneration and Environment's report that was attached to the Additional Papers/Supplementary Agenda for Cabinet of the 28 November 2007.

(b) Members Allowances 2007/8

To consider the Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer's report that was attached to the agenda for Cabinet of the 28 November 2007.

(c) Fees and Charges 2008/9

To consider the Environmental Health Manager's report that was attached to the agenda for Cabinet of the 28 November 2007.

(d) Footway Lighting

To consider the Service Manager (Environment)'s report that was attached to the agenda for Cabinet of the 28 November 2007.

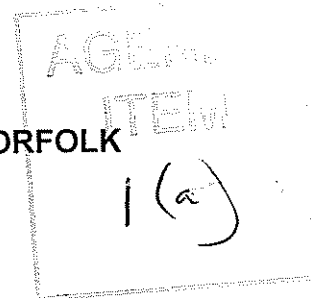
(NB Members are asked to bring their copies of the reports referred to in (a) – (d) above to the meeting).

* * * * *

Subject: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NORFOLK**

Report to: Cabinet and Council – 28 November 2007

Report by: Managing Director



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In July 2007, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that she was 'minded to' direct the Boundary Committee of the Electoral Commission to conduct a review of local government structures in the whole of Norfolk. This was prompted by Norwich City's bid for unitary status, which failed to meet the Government criteria on the City's existing boundary but demonstrated 'a strong case for a unitary authority ... on revised boundaries' (DCLG, 16.8.07).
- 1.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act was duly enacted on 30 October and provides the statutory machinery for the Boundary Committee to be tasked by Ministers to carry out reviews of local government structures. However, Ministers have still not issued the order for the commencement of the Norfolk review. Until the order is made, the scope and timetable for the review remain matters for conjecture.

2. TIMETABLE

2.1 The Boundary Committee is mindful of the potentially tight timetable for conducting the review if its final recommendations are to be made by the end of 2008 (in order to allow a transitional period before vesting in 2010). It has, therefore, already made contact with Norfolk's County and District Councils, has set out an indicative timetable and invited proposals for the new structure.

2.2 The review timetable is likely to be as follows:-

November 2007:	Outline proposals submitted to Boundary Committee
December 2007:	Boundary Committee identifies proposals for detailed evaluation

Jan – March 2008:	Full business case prepared for each proposal
April – June 2008:	Boundary Committee prepares draft recommendations
July – August 2008:	Boundary Committee consults on draft recommendations
Sep – Nov 2008:	Boundary Committee prepares final recommendations
Dec 2008 – Jan 2009:	Secretary of State takes final decision and, if appropriate, makes implementation orders
Jan 2009 – April 2010:	Transitional arrangements
May 2010:	Elections and vesting for new Councils

3. SCOPE

3.1 The Boundary Committee has endeavoured to give guidance on what is likely to be ruled in and out of the review. This has been informed by discussions with senior officials within DCLG. However, Ministers continue to be lobbied on the contents of the guidance and, at the time of writing, have still not made a definitive statement or set out a clear timescale for so doing. What follows, therefore, is the provisional interpretation of the Boundary Committee.

3.2 In arriving at their recommendations, the Committee will apply the same criteria as those used by the Secretary of State in assessing the bids for unitary status that arose from the Local Government White Paper, namely:-

- affordability,
- stronger leadership,
- improved local services,
- empowered communities,
- broad cross-section of support.

3.3 In particular, the Committee has emphasised three points time and again:-

- The review will cover the whole of Norfolk but will not extend beyond the county boundary. They have explicitly ruled out the 'Yarftoft' option.

- Status quo (ie two-tier) for all or part of Norfolk is not an option. The only route to a two-tier outcome would be to prove that all unitary options fail to meet the Government's criteria (see below). The Committee does not believe that this would be feasible in practice.
- The review will be evidence-based. Assertions will **not** be accepted unless they are supported by clear evidence.

4. RANGE OF OPTIONS

4.1 If the Boundary Committee's interpretation is correct, then the range of options that could realistically be considered as potentially satisfying the criteria set out in paragraph 3.2 above are:-

- A single unitary Council covering the whole of Norfolk
- Two unitary Councils – either Norwich and the rest of Norfolk or East Norfolk (including Norwich) and West Norfolk
- Three unitary Councils – North and East Norfolk; Norwich; South and West Norfolk
- Four unitary Councils – North and East Norfolk; Norwich; South Norfolk and Breckland; West Norfolk.

It is extremely unlikely that any option with more than four Councils could pass the affordability test.

5. CURRENT ACTIVITY

5.1 The Boundary Committee has invited Norfolk's County and District Councils to put forward options accompanied by an outline business case by 30 November. At this stage, they are looking for generalised statements setting out the rationale for each Norfolk-wide option and the underlying ethos of each of the Councils within that option. They are not requiring detailed financial or other resource-based information.

- 5.2 Each Council has identified a Lead Officer, generally at Director level, and a budget to support the detailed work on costings, assets, contracts etc that will be required for the detailed evaluations after Christmas. This Council's Lead Officer is Jane Ratcliffe and Council has already approved a budget of up to £100,000.
- 5.3 Clearly, the current position is still fluid, and will remain so until Ministers issue the formal guidance to the Boundary Committee. The Council's Leader, Managing Director and Lead Officer are in regular contact with their counterparts across Norfolk and a further update report will be provided at Cabinet and Council on 28 November.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 To note the report.

Dept Reference: RWP/VU - G:\HMLS\MemberServices\Robin Hodds\Reports\Managing Director - Local Gov Reorganisation.doc

Date: 20 November 2007

Background Papers:

Does this report raise any legal, financial, sustainability, equality, Crime and Disorder or Human Rights issues and, if so, have they been considered?	Issues	
	Legal	Yes
	Financial	Yes
	Sustainability	
	Equality	
	Crime and Disorder	
	Human Rights	

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1 (b)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION WORKING GROUP

7 November 2007 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor B Coleman (in the Chair); Councillors Castle, Stone and Wainwright.

Councillor Plant attended as substitute for Councillor Smith.

Mr R Packham (Managing Director), Mrs J Ratcliffe (Corporate Director – Customers and Resources) and Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer).

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

The Working Group gave consideration to the following issues:-

- (a) **The present position on the Review Process** - (The Working Group considered the Managing Director's update report as considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 October).
- (b) **The current thinking on Options** - (The Working Group considered the Leader's key points as presented to the Boundary Committee).
- (c) **An update on the work of the Lead Officer's Group**

The Managing Director confirmed that his update report still reflected the current position. Members were advised that guidance from the Minister had not yet been received although the arrival of the guidance should be imminent. The Managing Director tabled for consideration a copy of the Key Lines of Enquiry with regard to the Norfolk Review that had recently been received from the Boundary Committee. Members were informed that this framework should be used to inform and support both the proposals that are submitted at the end of November and the full business cases to be developed during Stage One of the Review.

In discussing in detail issues relating to the Norfolk Review, the following matters were discussed:-

- The Shadow Leader made the point that the Minister may still instruct the Boundary Committee to consider the "Yartoff" option even after the closing date for submission of the preferred options
- The Boundary Committee will undertake a filtering process of all options received. The point was made that the Boundary Committee was looking for a limited size of document on options identified at this stage

- The need to not be constrained by the current District boundaries and to use Parish boundaries as building blocks
- There would be a significant amount of shared data with other Local Authorities. The Managing Director made the point that if an option gets through to the Second Stage the Borough Council will be required to provide any necessary information
- It was expected that a significant proportion of the allocation of up to £100,000 as agreed by Council at its last meeting would be spent on assembling evidence about the Council's preferred identified option
- The need to think about a new way of delivering services for Norfolk as part of the determination of the Council's preferred option
- The point was made that Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn are the major economic and regeneration areas in Norfolk (excluding Norwich).

The Chairman referred to a request from the local branch of UNISON to sit as an observer at the future meeting of this Working Group. At this stage the Chairman reported that it was not expected that the Working Group would meet prior to the special meeting of Council on 28 November and accordingly the Managing Director agreed that he would arrange to have regular briefings with UNISON to update them on this issue.

In conclusion, the Working Group was advised of the following likely courses of action:-

- It was likely that the preferred option of the Ruling Group of the Borough Council would be to support the option to create an East Coast Council comprising the areas of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and parts of Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils
- It was likely that the Minority Group's preferred option would remain to be the "Yarstoff" option and that the local Labour Group would be likely to make a separate submission to the Boundary Committee on this particular option
- It was likely that the Managing Director would be producing a report for consideration by the special meeting of Council on 28 November on all options to be considered and that it was also likely that the Leader of the Council would be submitting a report on the Majority Group's preferred option.

2. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm.