

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Wednesday 9 December 2009

Present:-

Councillor Peter Edwards (Chair)
Councillors Mrs Henson, Coates, Fullam, D J Morrish, Noble, Shepherd and Sterry

Also Present

Chief Executive, Director Community and Environment, Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Policy and Member Services Officer (HB)

11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 and 30 March 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

13 **BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND'S REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES IN DEVON**

Following consultation on and consideration of the following two specific draft proposals:

- a county unitary authority; and
- a two-unitary pattern comprising Exeter and Exmouth and Rural Devon.

the Boundary Committee had advised the Secretary of State that its alternative proposal was "a unitary county comprising the whole of the existing two-tier area of Devon, on the basis of the arrangements set out in our report"

The Secretary of State would now decide on whether:

- to implement the original, that is, the City Council's proposal, with or without modification;
- to implement the alternative proposal of a County unitary authority with or without modification; or
- to take no action.

There would be a period for representations to be made to the Secretary of State about either the Boundary Committee's alternative proposal or the original Exeter proposal. This period would run from 8 December 2009 until 19 January 2010.

Members considered the advice against the background of earlier decisions in respect of unitary local government in neighbouring Counties, the history of the City Council's bid and its previous decisions on the matter, the position in respect of the Boundary Committee's advice on unitary local government in Norfolk and Suffolk, the potential response of other Devon Authorities both to the Boundary Committee's recommendation and the City Council's representations on it and the likely timetable for the implementation of any decision other than the retention of the status quo.

Members were unanimously opposed to the Boundary Committee's recommendation for a single unitary authority for Devon, excluding Plymouth and Torbay. Some Members suggested that, given the current economic and political climate, the third option above, that is, retaining the status quo might be more widely welcomed. The widespread view however was that the only way forward was to re-assert to the Secretary of State Exeter's desire for unitary governance based on its current boundaries.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (1) Council rejects the Boundary Committee's recommendation for a single unitary authority for Devon, excluding Plymouth and Torbay, as it believes the scale of such a body would leave it remote from and unrepresentative of the citizens who would rely on its services; and
- (2) Council believes there is little support for a unitary form of local government in rural Devon and so calls on the Secretary of State to accept Exeter City Council's original proposal for unitary status on its existing boundaries, which would provide strong, democratic and dynamic governance for Exeter and leave the rest of Devon within the two-tier structure.

(Report circulated)

(The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 5.00 pm)

Chair