

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the ELECTIONS PANEL held in Meeting Room 1, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon on Wednesday, 27 August 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor D Harty – Chairman.
Councillors J E Garner, A N Gilbert,
M F Newman and G S E Thorpe.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P J Downes and T D Sanderson.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th May 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

7. ELECTORAL CYCLE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

By way of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with recent legislative changes that would enable the Council to alter its electoral cycle. Currently the Council undertook elections for a third of its Members each year followed by a fallow year when no District elections were held. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 had made it possible to move to whole Council elections and, should the need arise, to revert to elections by thirds. Having noted the procedure that would need to be followed should a change in the electoral cycle need to be made, the implications of a change for town and parish councils, the likely financial implications and other consequential considerations, Members were informed that, if the Council decided to move to whole Council elections, it would need to pass a resolution to that effect by the end of 2010.

Before coming to a view on whether the Council should change its electoral cycle, the Panel requested that Members were consulted on what would be suitable electoral arrangements for the Council and that the outcome of that consultation was reported to a future meeting.

8. REVIEW OF PARISH ARRANGEMENTS IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained an update on progress of implementation of recommendations made following the conclusion of the review of parish arrangements in

Huntingdonshire. Following approval by the Council at its meeting on 20th February 2008 of a series of recommendations for changes to parish electoral arrangements, the necessary Orders had been made, which brought these changes into effect. Copies of the Orders had been sent to the councils affected and to various other bodies prescribed in legislation.

At the time the review was completed the Council did not have the powers under the legislation then in force to implement a significant number of its recommendations. Consequently these had to be submitted to the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to act upon. The situation changed when the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 came into force and the Council now was responsible for implementing this kind of change. However, under the associated transitional arrangements, on this occasion, the Department of Communities and Local Government had undertaken to implement the recommendations. Once this process had been completed the Council would be responsible for taking resulting consequential actions. There was expected to be a small number of other minor boundary changes that the Electoral Commission would have to make. The Panel requested that those parishes affected by the recommendations were informed of progress.

Chairman