

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM: Chief Executive**

**REPORT NUMBER: H102**

**TO: STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING: 18 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW – RESPONSE TO THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE’S DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR SUFFOLK**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is to enable the Committee to consider a draft response to the Boundary Committee’s Draft Proposals for unitary local government in Suffolk and Norfolk (insofar as the latter affects Lowestoft in Suffolk), and to make appropriate recommendations to an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council on 23 September 2008.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That subject to:

- i) further information on affordability assessments of the Boundary Committee’s Draft Proposal for Suffolk and the alternative pattern for a single unitary council also identified in their Report as having merit, and
- ii) final consideration of all responses received to Babergh’s consultation with Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders in the district, as summarised at Appendix (a), together with any other responses that might follow.

2.2 The Boundary Committee’s Draft Proposal to create a North Haven and a Suffolk unitary authority be supported.

2.3 In accordance with paragraph 6.38 of the Boundary Committee’s Report, the Boundary Committee be requested to consider modifying the boundary between the two proposed unitary councils within the current Babergh district to include Hadleigh and a number of its neighbouring parishes as shown on the map at Appendix (b).

2.4 The draft response to the Boundary Committee at Appendix (c) be endorsed.

The Committee is asked to make recommendations to Full Council on the above matters.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The projected financial implications of implementing particular unitary patterns for Suffolk are still the subject of detailed consideration by the S151 Officers of each of the Suffolk councils. At the time of preparing this report, their analysis is still not complete. If any information becomes available for 18 September, it

will be circulated at the meeting as an additional paper for this agenda item. However, subject to further legal advice, this may at that stage still have to be treated as confidential. In these circumstances, the information would be contained in a paper to be dealt with in the exempt part of the agenda, but the Chairman would seek the agreement of the Committee to deal with that exempt information before dealing with the substantive paper in the open part of the meeting.

#### 4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Business Risk No 1. Key risks are set out below:

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Seriousness or Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
<p><b>Local Government Review</b> Failure to engage in the review process</p> <p>Lack of influence on future local government arrangements</p>	Low	Critical	<p>Strong political and managerial leadership to secure effective engagement with the process</p> <p>Engagement with stakeholders during consultation period</p> <p>Submission of consultation response by deadline</p>

#### 5. **KEY INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Strategy Committee has considered this matter on 31 July 2008 (paper H74) and 14 August 2008 (paper H89). Between those two meetings, a Members' Seminar on 5 August discussed the issues informally. Full Council then gave preliminary consideration to the Council's response on 2 September 2008.
- 5.2 Members are asked to bring these papers with them to the meeting.
- 5.3 During the consultation period, the views of Babergh's Town and Parish Councillors and other key stakeholders has been sought, both on the Boundary Committee's Draft Proposal and on the possibility of seeking a modification to the proposed boundary between the two proposed unitary areas, as shown on the map at Appendix (b).
- 5.4 A summary of consultation responses received to date is provided at Appendix (a). An update on any further responses received by 18 September will be

provided at the meeting. It is acknowledged that revisions to parts of the draft response may be needed in the light of a final analysis of all consultation responses received.

- 5.5 The position on affordability assessments is referred to in section 3 of this paper.
- 5.6 Subject to final analysis of all consultation responses and the affordability assessments, the Council's suggested response is at Appendix (c).
- 5.7 This draft response considers the key issues raised by Babergh at the Concept Formulation Stage (April 2008) and the extent to which these issues are satisfactorily addressed by the Boundary Committee's Draft Proposal for Suffolk. The draft response deals with key matters, including:
- i) the extent to which the proposals for a two-unitary county involving a North Haven and a Suffolk unitary council adequately meet the Secretary of State's five criteria. The draft response suggests that these criteria are likely to be well met by the Draft Proposal, and therefore indicates that this Council supports the Draft Proposal.
  - ii) concerns that the case for the Suffolk unitary (referred to in the draft response as the Rural Suffolk unitary) has not been well-articulated to date, with the focus in discussions across the county generally being on the North Haven unitary, a single unitary for the county (referred to in the draft response as the One Suffolk unitary) and other alternatives to the Boundary Committee's Draft Proposal. The response suggests that urgent attention should be given to this if the overall Draft Proposal is not to be placed in jeopardy.
  - iii) a suggestion that the boundary between the two proposed unitaries within the Babergh district be modified as shown on the map at Appendix (b). It is acknowledged that Strategy Committee and Full Council will wish to give full consideration to this particular matter in the light of all consultation responses received and, therefore, that this part of the draft response may need modification or even removal from our response. The section dealing with this matter is therefore simply drafted as suggested appropriate wording if Members are ultimately minded to make this recommendation to the Boundary Committee after full consideration of all relevant issues.
  - iv) a recommendation that the single unitary option for Suffolk be not pursued.
  - v) a recommendation that in the event of Lowestoft being included in unitary arrangements for Suffolk, the Boundary Committee looks at alternative two or three unitary arrangements as referred to in the draft response, on the basis that the inclusion of Lowestoft in a Rural Suffolk unitary would fundamentally distort the rationale for that unitary and that a single unitary in the county is not a model that this Council now wishes to support, for reasons set out in the draft response.

6. **APPENDICES**

- (a) Summary of Consultation Responses.
- (b) Map Showing Possible Alternative Boundary between the North Haven and Suffolk unitary councils within the current Babergh district.
- (c) Babergh's Draft Response to the Boundary Committee's Draft Proposal.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

Babergh DC Concept Submission to the Boundary Committee – April 2008

The Boundary Committee's Draft Proposals for Unitary Local Government in Norfolk and Suffolk – July 2008

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## SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

	Boundary Committee Proposal (Rural and North Haven Authorities)	Boundary Committee Proposal with Extended Boundary for North Haven	Unitary Suffolk
<b>PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS</b>			
Lavenham	Maintain status quo		
Groton	Yes		No
Shelley	Yes - but Shelley to be in Rural Suffolk		No
Belstead	Yes		
Polstead	Yes	No strong view	No
Holbrook		Yes – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes	No
Stutton		Yes – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes	
Copdock & Washbrook		Yes – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes	
Chilton		Yes – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes	No
Shotley		Yes – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes (but further meeting being held)	
Burstall		Yes – with Burstall switching from Rural Suffolk to North Haven	
Sudbury		The two unitary set-up needs to be more evenly split	No
Elmsett	No – but if it does come in, then no change to the boundary		Yes (further meeting being held)
Assington	No – but if it does come in, then Assington to be in Rural Unitary		Yes (further meeting being held)
Stratford St Mary		Yes (2 <sup>nd</sup> preference? - but with Stratford St Mary moving into Rural Unitary)	Yes (1 <sup>st</sup> preference?)
Sproughton		No (but if it does come in, then Hadleigh to be included)	Yes (further meeting being held)
Layham		Yes (2 <sup>nd</sup> preference? – Hadleigh & surrounding parishes)	Yes (1 <sup>st</sup> preference?)
Aldham			Yes
Great Wenham		No	Yes (inc Lowestoft)
Little Wenham		No	Yes (inc Lowestoft?)
Stoke by Nayland	No		Yes

	<b>Boundary Committee Proposal (Rural and North Haven Authorities)</b>	<b>Boundary Committee Proposal with Extended Boundary for North Haven</b>	<b>Unitary Suffolk</b>
Milden		No	Yes
East Bergholt	No		Yes (inc Lowestoft)
Thorpe Morieux			Yes (further meeting being held)
Kersey	No		Yes (further meeting being held)
Freston	Initial response received but no clear view yet		
Leavenheath			
Kettlebaston			
Capel St Mary			
<b>OTHER STAKEHOLDERS</b>			
SAVO			Yes
Suffolk Preservation Society	Proposals are fundamentally flawed and therefore not acceptable.		

Following the publication of the Boundary Committee's report meetings were held on 14 and 17 July, in the west and east of the district, with parish and town councils and SALC. On 8 and 15 August, letters and copies of the reports discussed at Strategy Committee were sent out to update parish and town councils on progress in developing Babergh's response to the Boundary Committee's proposals. An initial letter and an update were also sent to other stakeholders in the Babergh area, such as Chambers of Commerce and voluntary organizations.

The parish and town councils and other stakeholders were asked to let us know their views on the Boundary Committee's proposals to assist in formulating our own response.

28 parish and town councils and two other stakeholders have written to us. The views of Hadleigh Town Council are not yet known, but the Hadleigh Town mayor has consulted with local residents through the Hadleigh Community News, expressing his view that the possible boundary change would be beneficial to Hadleigh and surrounding parishes. He is calling a special meeting of the town council to consider its response in light of that consultation.

Of the 28 parish and town councils, 25 indicated preferences, but it should be noted that in a number of cases only preliminary views have been given with a formal response to follow later in the consultation period.

Of the 25 parish and town council responses, whilst a number of councils questioned the need for the review, only one rejects the Boundary Committee's proposals and recommends no change.

11 are in favour of a two-unitary Suffolk. Four of these would like the boundaries as set out in the Boundary Committee's main proposal (one would be in the proposed North Haven Authority and three in Rural Suffolk) with the remaining seven indicating that they would like to see changes made to the boundaries. Five of these would like to see the North Haven boundary extended to include Hadleigh and its surrounding parishes, and one, currently just inside the Rural Suffolk boundary would like to be moved into the North Haven area. The remaining council advocates a more even geographical or population-based split between the North Haven and Rural Suffolk authorities.

Of the seven councils, four are already in the proposed North Haven area, one wishes to be moved into North Haven and two would remain in Rural Suffolk after the boundary change.

The 13 other councils are in favour of the One Suffolk option. 10 would be in the proposed Rural Suffolk Authority, of which five would transfer to North Haven if the boundary was extended to include Hadleigh and its surrounding parishes. The remaining three are in the proposed North Haven Authority.

Of the 13 councils in favour of the One Suffolk option, five gave views on the two-unitary Suffolk option. If this went forward:

- One would like the boundaries as set out in the Boundary Committee's main proposal (this council would transfer from Rural Suffolk to North Haven if the boundary was extended to include Hadleigh and its surrounding parishes);
- One would like to remain in Rural Suffolk if the North Haven boundary was extended (this council would not be directly affected if the North Haven boundary was extended to include Hadleigh and its surrounding parishes);
- One, currently just inside the North Haven boundary would like to be moved into the Rural Suffolk area; and
- Two would like the North Haven boundary to be extended to include Hadleigh and its surrounding parishes (one of these councils is already within the proposed North Haven Authority whilst the other would be moved from Rural Suffolk to North Haven).

With regard to the two other stakeholders, the Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations (SAVO) is firmly in favour of the One Suffolk proposal whilst the Suffolk Preservation Society argues that the Boundary Committee proposals are fundamentally flawed and therefore not acceptable.

