

News release

Monday 7 July 2008
EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON

Boundary Committee publishes draft proposals for Norfolk and Suffolk

The Boundary Committee for England has published draft proposals for patterns of unitary local government in Norfolk and Suffolk, and has called for people in the counties to set out their views on these proposals.

In Norfolk, the Committee proposes a single unitary authority which would cover the whole county and include Lowestoft. The proposal for Suffolk is for two unitary authorities – one covering Ipswich and Felixstowe and one covering the rest of the county without Lowestoft.

The Committee considers its draft proposal for each county likely to achieve the outcomes on which the government has asked for advice (affordability; value for money services; neighbourhood empowerment and engagement; broad cross section of support; and strategic leadership).

However, the Committee also saw merit in other patterns of unitary local government in both counties. In Norfolk, the Committee thought there was merit in linking Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Norwich in a unitary authority, the rest of Norfolk would form another unitary authority. We also saw merit in a 'doughnut' pattern, with one authority for Norwich on expanded boundaries and one for the remainder of Norfolk which would also include Lowestoft.

In Suffolk, we thought there was merit in a Suffolk unitary authority covering the whole county except for Lowestoft. People may wish to consider what

we've said about these other patterns when they write to us telling us what they think.

Max Caller, Chair of the Boundary Committee for England, said: "These proposals take a fresh look at local government in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has asked us for our advice on unitary local government in both counties. Your responses to the draft proposal will inform the advice we give so tell us what you think. More importantly, tell us why you think that.

"We've spent a lot of time in the county talking to individuals and councils, and we think these proposals have the potential to offer people in Norfolk and Suffolk stronger local government capable of providing better and more efficient services to meet the new challenges that will face them."

Responses to the draft proposals can be made by filling in an online form at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk or writing to:

Review Manager
(Norfolk and Suffolk Review)
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

Email: reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

The period for responses closes on 26 September. The Committee will then consider responses before making final recommendations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by 31 December 2008.

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For further information contact:

Gareth Nicholson on 020 7271 0638
email: press@boundarycommittee.org.uk
outside office hours: 07789 920414

Notes to editors:

1. The Boundary Committee for England is responsible for reviewing local authority electoral arrangements, e.g. defining boundaries for local elections and the number of councillors to be elected, and for conducting reviews of local government external boundaries and structure.
2. The Committee's last structural reviews took place in 2003/04 in Northumberland, Co Durham, North Yorkshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire in advance of a referendum on elected regional assemblies.
3. Twenty-six bids for unitary status were made to the Secretary of State in early 2007. Three of these – from Exeter City Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Norwich City Council – have been referred to the Boundary Committee for England for advice.
4. The Secretary of State felt that Ipswich's proposal would not meet all of the five criteria she set out. She asked the Boundary Committee to advise whether, for the City of Ipswich and the remaining Suffolk county area, there could be an alternative pattern of unitary local government.
5. The power for the Secretary of State to request the Boundary Committee for advice is contained in Section 5 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
6. The Secretary of State has requested that advice is provided by 31 December 2008