

To: All SCDC Town and Parish Councils

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Our Ref: APO/LL  
Your Ref:

10 April 2009

Dear Colleague

**SUFFOLK COASTAL'S POSITION ON LATEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
REVIEW ANNOUNCEMENT**

Further to the Parish Liaison meetings held on 30 March 2009 I am writing to reiterate Suffolk Coastal's position following the latest announcement from the Boundary Committee for England (BCE) relating to the Local Government Review (LGR) process in Suffolk.

The BCE published its 'further proposals' for unitary local government in Suffolk on 19 March, and they are no different from the ones it published last July – except thankfully they have decided to keep Lowestoft in Suffolk. Suffolk Coastal has outlined on numerous occasions our concerns about both the One Suffolk as well as the North Haven and Rural Suffolk proposals which are outlined in the attached position statement summary.

The BCE has completely ignored our proposal for East Suffolk, West Suffolk and an Ipswich, as well as other proposals put forward by other Suffolk authorities. Suffolk Coastal firmly believes that if unitary local government has to be implemented, then East, West and Ipswich is the only logical proposal to meet the individual needs of people in each of those distinct areas. However, the BCE appear to have ignored many individuals and organisations in putting forward their reheated proposals.

The BCE has not listened to Suffolk Coastal; it hasn't listened to other Suffolk local authorities (Waveney; St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath) and it hasn't listened to Towns and Parishes. When surveyed the majority of Suffolk Coastal Town and Parish Councils did not want the current proposals. Instead Town and Parish Councils wanted an opportunity to respond on either maintaining/improving current structures or the three way unitary model comprising East Suffolk, West Suffolk and Ipswich.

As an area Suffolk Coastal is facing a significantly challenging period. We expect increased demand on various services with residents and communities needing greater support in uncertain times. All this is at a time when local authorities face increasing budgetary pressures.

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It is understandable that many individuals and organisations must be suffering from “consultation fatigue” over the whole LGR process. However, it is important to remain engaged in the process to ensure that the concerns previously expressed are not ignored during this new round of consultation.

Our response to the BCE and the Secretary of State is very clear. If unitary government has to be introduced in Suffolk then we believe East, West, and Ipswich is the only logical model. However, we would suggest that now is not the time to be looking at introducing any significant reorganisation in Suffolk but to leave us to get on with delivering core services for our residents and tackling our budgetary pressures.

This is not to say we stand still - in fact quite the opposite. It is the possibility of an ever extended period of uncertainty on LGR that makes it so difficult for all the authorities involved to move on and innovate in solving the huge challenges that we face. As an authority we have been continually innovative and business like in our approach to developing services. However in these challenging times we need to look again at how all of our services are being delivered and build on what we have already achieved through new ways of working. We are working very closely with Waveney with whom we share a Chief Executive and other services. In fact had it not been for this lengthy LGR process those plans would have been further advanced. We also envisage developing even further the good relationship that we have with Town and Parish Councils ensuring a comprehensive ‘three tier’ approach.

We are therefore writing to all of our Towns and Parishes advising you of our stance and to remind you that you do not have to sign up to either option put forward by the Boundary Committee. We are going to respond to the Boundary Committee along the lines set out in this letter. You can also put forward your own views including enhancement to the current ‘three tier’ model. We would implore you to do so, by the deadline of 14 May, giving your reasons why the improved ‘three tier’ model is right for Suffolk at this time or if unitary government has to be introduced then the East; West and Ipswich model should be selected. The contact details for the BCE are: Review Manager (Suffolk Review), The Boundary Committee for England, Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HW.

There will then be an opportunity for direct representation to the Secretary of State, for four weeks from 15 July 2009 which will have even greater impact. The contact details are: Rt Hon Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU, Email: Hazel.Blears@Communities.gsi.gov.uk.

We shall be taking a position statement, on our proposed response to the BCE, to Suffolk Coastal’s Council meeting on 23 April 2009. Meanwhile if you require any further clarification regarding the LGR process please contact Alison Matthews on 01394 444435.

Yours sincerely



Ray Herring  
Leader of the Council