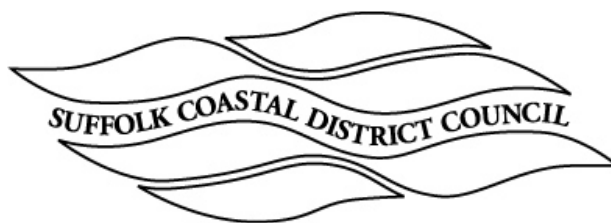


**Melton Hill, Woodbridge  
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To: All Town and Parish Councils

Please ask for: Ray Herring  
Direct Dial: (01728) 746337  
E-mail address: ray.herring  
@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk  
Our Ref: APO/LL  
Your Ref:

25 September 2008

Dear Colleague

### **RESPONDING TO THE REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SUFFOLK**

I appreciate that many Town and Parish Councils have received an avalanche of different material from various sources often presenting conflicting views on the Suffolk Local Government Review. For instance, last week local media coverage featured promises of savings and Council Tax reductions based on proposals relating to the One Suffolk and North Haven/Rural Suffolk Business Cases which have now been submitted to the Boundary Committee for consideration. These Business Cases form the foundation of the "affordability" criteria which the Boundary Committee will take into account when making their recommendation to the Secretary of State for their preferred future model of Local Government in Suffolk

My reason for writing to you is to make you aware that a number of the Suffolk Chief Finance Officers responsible for "signing off" the Business Cases to the Boundary Committee have expressed a range of reservations about the affordability process including the following comments:

- Although it is felt that finance officers of the lead authorities have done the best possible job in the circumstances, the extremely tight timescale imposed by the Boundary Committee creates a risk that the business cases are not based upon robust policy making and political direction, and there is a risk that errors and weaknesses in the business cases may not have been detected due to insufficient scrutiny.
- There is a risk that the Suffolk business cases will later be proved to be unreliable with the margin of error insufficient to guarantee "affordability".
- It is questioned whether assumptions regarding closure of existing District Council offices are reasonable given locality/community based imperative.
- In the Rural and Unitary Suffolk business cases, late revisions to the Shared Services savings calculation were made without explanation or opportunity for scrutiny of the changes. There is a risk that savings have been overstated.

contd

There are a number of other inconsistencies and concerns expressed by the Suffolk Finance Officers that I have not set out in this letter but regardless of what views you may have reached ahead of the affordability work I urge you now to fully familiarise yourself with the financial risks and reservations by accessing the Business Case Affordability Workbooks via the Boundary Committee Website. Otherwise, without an understanding of the concerns surrounding the affordability work, any response to the Boundary Committee will be incomplete.

There has been a lot of concern expressed about the lack of time to respond to the Boundary Committee by their consultation deadline of 26 September 2008 particularly when considering that the affordability work wasn't completed until the end of last week. I share those concerns, and therefore, I have persuaded the Boundary Committee to allow representations to be received after the formal closing date for consultation on 26 September. The Boundary Committee have not set any deadline for receipt of further representation but obviously comments should be sent as soon as possible bearing in mind that the Boundary Committee will be working towards their recommendation to the Secretary of State on 31 December 2008. Representation is not confined to views about the affordability work and can cover any aspect of the LGR process including views on alternative proposals etc. During the period 1 January 2009 until 28 January 2009 direct representation can also be made to the Secretary of State

The contact details for the Boundary Committee are set out below:

The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London, SW1P 2HW  
[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7271 0680  
Fax: 020 7271 0505

The proposals being developed for Local Government in Suffolk, if implemented, are likely to remain with us for 30+ years. Therefore we all have a responsibility to future generations to ensure that any proposed new structure is created on the basis of informed decision making. However, it is clear on the evidence from the affordability work on the Business Cases that there are significant reservations and risks that pose serious questions about the viability of the current proposals

I therefore urge you to read the full list of risk and reservations on the Affordability Workbooks that are now on the Boundary Committee website before you make your views known to the Boundary Committee. Meanwhile Suffolk Coastal's view is that if Unitary Local Government must be introduced the best model for service delivery and local communities would be three Councils representing East Suffolk (from Felixstowe to Lowestoft); West Suffolk and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Ray Herring  
Leader of Suffolk Coastal District Council