

Governors Council

Report of:	Foundation & Communications Manager
Title:	Unitary Status – Structural reviews
Date:	16 th May 2008
Action:	For attention

Summary

The Boundary Committee is currently carrying out structural reviews in Norfolk and Suffolk.

A brief outline of the reviews is attached, together with the information available on the Committee's website in relation to both Norfolk and Suffolk.

The submission from this Trust is also enclosed.

Recommendation

The Governors Council is asked to note the reviews.

Structural reviews

What is a structural review?

We carry out structural reviews in order to provide advice to the Government on the possible creation of one or more new unitary authorities in an area.

In England there are currently a number of two-tier areas where two different councils provide local government services: a **county council** and a **district council**, with district councils being known in some areas as borough or city councils.

A **unitary authority** is a council which is responsible for providing all services in an area, such as education, social services and emptying the bins. If established, a unitary authority replaces both the county council and the district council in that area.

Structural reviews in [Devon](#), [Norfolk](#) and [Suffolk](#)

We accepted a [request to provide advice to the Secretary of State](#) on the bids for unitary government in **Exeter, Ipswich and Norwich**.

The Secretary of State has requested that we look at local government structures and advise whether, for each county area, there could be alternative unitary authority solutions which may involve changes to local authority boundaries.

In order to provide this, on **3 March 2008** we started structural reviews in Norfolk, Suffolk and Devon. When the reviews are completed we will provide the Secretary of State with advice. When providing advice and making any proposals for unitary local government in any of the counties under review, we will use the same criteria that the Secretary of State used when assessing the bids she received for unitary status in 2007.

As part of the review in Devon, it is also open for us to recommend boundary changes to the existing unitary authorities of **Plymouth** and **Torbay**. Local government structures in Norfolk and Suffolk will be considered together as we have been asked by Government to provide advice on whether there could be a unitary option which crosses the county boundary in the **Great Yarmouth** and **Waveney** areas.

The reviews will include public consultation to allow local people to have their say on the draft proposals, which will be published in **Summer 2008**. Full details of how to provide your views to us will be provided in due course.

It will be for us to decide whether to make an alternative proposal for one or more new unitary authorities in each county area. The Secretary of State will then decide whether or not to implement any alternative proposals that we make.

We have produced an [advice note](#) which gives more information on how we propose to undertake the reviews, including a description of each of the stages of the review.

We have also provided a list of [frequently asked questions](#) to help those who are interested in the review find out more.

If you would like to see online versions of the leaflets and posters which were sent to councils in the affected areas, please follow the links below

- [Poster for the Devon review](#)
- [Leaflet for the Devon review](#)
- [Poster for the Norfolk & Suffolk Review](#)
- [Leaflet for the Norfolk & Suffolk Review](#)

Previous structural reviews

Between 2003 and 2004, we were directed by the Deputy Prime Minister to carry out [local government reviews](#) recommending unitary authorities in the **North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber regions**, before planned referendums on elected regional assemblies took place.

Between 1992 and 1995 the Local Government Commission for England reviewed the structure of local government across **all the two-tier areas in England**. As a result [46 new unitary authorities](#) were created.