

Report on lessons learnt from Governance Review

1. Background

The Governance review was conducted in 3 stages, In summary

1.1. An initial review of the terms of reference.

At this stage the prime option was a merger derived from the BCVRA petition and SMBC consulted to see if there were other options. Balsall PC lobbied to get a move of Balsall Parish boundary to HS2 included. Balsall PC plus some residents' responses achieved this objective.

1.2. Second Consultation

This offered the options of a merger or a move of the boundary to HS2. Mark Tattum canvassed houses in east Balsall Common and got signatures (on a petition probably) in support of moving the Balsall PC boundary. There were about double the number of supporters for a boundary move compared to merger with 3rd place being "no change principally organised in rural Berkswell.

The Governance Committee were not impressed with the number of responses which were way below the number of signatures on the original BCVRA petition. There were good speeches to the Governance Committee from the "no change" residents. The Governance Committee decided on a special (third) consultation this time with "No change" as an option with the other option being the Balsall PC option of move the boundary.

1.3. Third Consultation

This was a simple choice of change to HS2 or "No change". There were 4 principal communications

- 1.3.1. Posters in Balsall Common calling for "option B". No group/individual admitted publishing these
- 1.3.2. A leaflet from the Berkswell Society in two formats covering west of HS2 and east of HS2 respectively delivered to almost all homes in Berkswell Parish
- 1.3.3. Door to door canvassing by residents under the banner of the Berkswell Society
- 1.3.4. A leaflet urging "Option B" delivered to a lot of houses in Balsall Common but few in rural Berkswell either east or west of HS2. Again, there was no indication of who published this communication.

2. Lessons from the doorstep

2.1. Things that helped Berkswell PC boundaries to remain unchanged -The Top issues

- 2.1.1. Berkswell Society leaflet
- 2.1.2. The willingness of 20 or so residents to fight for us and many who actively objected to the poster campaign
- 2.1.3. The NDP/Solihull Plan leaflet
- 2.1.4. Berkswell Society activities in the community
- 2.1.5. Trees, planters & bulbs (major on Berkswell Gate, Station Road and Old Waste lane and somewhat on Sunnyside). Particularly the station, station roundabout and the fruit trees.

- 2.1.6. Berkswell Society success on noise mitigation on HS2 and a single council involved (for Berkswell gate and Waste lane)
- 2.1.7. Berkswell School (major on Berkswell Gate)
- 2.1.8. Berkswell Church
- 2.1.9. NDP and the PC reaction to Solihull plan
- 2.1.10. A democratic and fair elected Governance Committee

2.2. Other issues that helped to some (limited) extent

- 2.2.1. Berkswell Scouts
- 2.2.2. Cross community organisations
- 2.2.3. Grants (Cricket, Schools, Methodist Scouts, Hornets mentioned)
- 2.2.4. Some mentioned Berkswell PC were an active council
- 2.2.5. Antipathy towards Balsall PC including its refusal to work with Berkswell
- 2.2.6. No case for change advanced other than “unite Balsall Common”

2.3. Things that went against us

- 2.3.1. Objecting to individual planning applications e.g. house extensions (Beechwood/Hodgett’s Lane)
- 2.3.2. The parish border seems very illogical to some of those near the centre of Balsall Common
- 2.3.3. Reputation for some of being Berkswell village centric
- 2.3.4. Poor communications prior to the Berkswell Society and NDP leaflets
 - 2.3.4.1. Berkswell PC information in the Bugle seems not to be read by many
 - 2.3.4.2. Berkswell Society leaflet contained news to many
- 2.3.5. The two PCs do not get on (this an issue in Balsall Parish particularly for some)

3. Things to do for the future (provisional list)

- Continue to actively provide services to Balsall Common and rural Berkswell outside Berkswell village
 - Continue to work with the BCVRA as well as the Berkswell Society
- Improve communications
 - perhaps with focused leaflet drops
 - Review what we do and how in the Bugle
 - Can we do more with facebook/twitter
 - Get more people in the Berkswell Society to receive their communication
- Focus on the big issues not the minutiae to deliver valuable things to residents
 - There are too few of us to waste time on nit shit
 - E.g. The NDP is not finished until the houses are built as we want them
- It is about people
 - Get more people involved
 - Listen
 - Find out what residents want and not what we think is important