Boundary Reviews

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This factsheet is designed to provide advice and guidance to those people engaged in or considering the review of Scout District or Scout County/Area boundaries. It does not deal with every eventuality but provides a general overview for the process.

Deciding to review

There are many reasons why the Scouting boundaries in a particular area may be reviewed. It may be as a result of:

- An ongoing review
- The inability to find adults to support the current structure
- As a response to a specific need.
- As part of a development strategy
- The direction of the County/Area, Regional or Chief Commissioner

Whatever the reason for undertaking the review the matter should be first discussed with the appropriate Commissioner (ie the County / Area / (Scottish) Regional Commissioner for District reviews and the (Wales / Northern Ireland) Chief Commissioner or (English) Regional Commissioner for County/Area reviews). Advice and support for reviews is available from the relevant Commissioner and from the Regional Development Service in England and Country HQs elsewhere.

Public Statement

Having decided to undertake a review it is advisable to make an early public statement. This will assist the process by helping Members in the area under review to understand what is happening, the reasons for the review and the process that will be followed. One good example of such a statement was where a Commissioner used the Annual General Meeting to announce a review using the phrase "Staying as we are is not an option". The Commissioner then went on to outline the reasons and plans for their review.

Agreeing the Terms of the Review

Written terms of reference for the review should be drawn up and agreed with the appropriate Commissioner. Advice for writing these should be sought from the Regional Development Service / Country HQ as appropriate.

These terms of reference should be specific about the geographical area under review, the outcomes required from the review process and to whom the outcomes are reported. The terms of reference should be clear that the outcomes should take into account the original issues that initiated the review and any current thinking.

In addition the terms of reference should provide a clear and realistic timeframe. Depending upon the complexity of the review this should be somewhere between three and six months.

The appropriate Commissioner may designate someone to lead the review. In this case it would be appropriate to compile a role description and person profile for this person.

Appointing the Person Who Will Lead the Review

The Commissioner responsible for initiating the review is responsible for appointing the lead person. Best practice is for this person to be independent of the area being reviewed and it is also advisable for this person to have some experience at the level of the review e.g. a County review may be lead by an ex County Commissioner or a District review may be lead by a neighbouring District Commissioner.

The first task for this person will be to create an outline project plan which enables them to identify the skills and experience needed from members of the review team.

Establishing a Review Team

The person leading the review should recruit a small team to work with them through the process. In generating names, they may find it helpful to confer with the Regional Development Service or Country HQ as appropriate.

When recruiting members of the review team particular consideration should be given to sensitivity, confidentiality and discretion. It is essential to ensure that everyone is clear about their role. Formal role descriptions for each member of the team may help to clarify this.

Doing the Review

There are many ways in which the review can be carried out. No one method is appropriate in all situations. Often a combination of methods may offer the widest opportunity for people to contribute to the review process. As a key principle the more the Review Team is seen to consult the more those affected will feel a part of the process.

Underlying all methods is a cycle of information gathering, analysing and considering the possible options. These options may lead to a further need for information gathering or consultation hence continuing the review cycle.

Gathering information

The information gathered may be a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative information includes hard facts such as:

- Annual Scout Census Returns
- Demographics – www.statistics.gov.uk or www.dfes.gov.uk
- Numbers and location of Scout Groups
- Local government boundaries etc.

Qualitative information is somewhat softer in nature and may include opinions, objections and aspirations. The Review Team should create opportunities for people to contribute to the consultation process through both verbal and non-verbal communication. For example the Review Team may:

- Speak with individuals. These people may be chosen at random or because they hold certain appointments or have particular experience.
- Allowing people to respond by post or email to an open letter or questionnaire (it may be worth setting up a separate email address for this).

Time should also be set aside to gather best practice from other sources. This could include speaking to other organisations or those who have undertaken similar exercises elsewhere in Scouting.

Analysis

There are various methods by which information can be analysed. These may include methods such as PEST (Political, Economic, Social, Technical) analysis, SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and cost-benefit analysis. However it is equally important to analyse the soft information collected to draw conclusions about the views and feelings of all stakeholders.

Whilst it is important to take into account people's views and feelings, the analysis will need to consider the best outcomes for Scouting in the area. This will require analysis of the structure of; local government, communication routes, local communities, funding sources etc.

In parallel with this, the viability / feasibility of each Group and District will need to be considered. Consider what the minimum numbers should be and how local Leaders can be best supported.

Options

As options present themselves, the Review Team should consider whether they need further information to understand the consequences of any proposal. If appropriate, this information should be gathered and the options re-considered.

The team should consider as many options as possible. These can then be prioritised to give a final list that can be fed back to the decision makers or the person initiating the review.

Feedback & Decisions

Once the final options are decided upon and prioritised these should be presented, together with recommendations, to the appropriate Commissioner. They in turn, should then present the information and recommendations to the appropriate decision making body.

The decision making body for changes to the boundaries of a Scout District is the relevant County/Area Executive Committee.

The decision to change County/Area boundaries rests with the Trustee Board or the appropriate Country HQ.

In any cases of doubt, guidance should be sought from The Secretary's Department at Gilwell Park.

Once the relevant committee has considered the options, it may be necessary to undertake a final period of consultation before a decision is made. However the final decision lies firmly with the appropriate County/Area Executive for District reviews and the Trustee Board / Country HQ for County/Area reviews.

Once the decision has been made the implementation of the decisions should be addressed.

Communicating the Decision

Once the appropriate committee has made the decision must be communicated to all those involved.

Inevitably some people will find it difficult to accept the decisions and may need further explanation to help understand the benefits to Scouting as a whole. Others will want to move forward quickly, which may in itself have its own drawbacks.

It is worth considering in what order people should be informed and how quickly the process of communication can be completed. Remember that once the decision is made people will start their own informal communication. It is important that a formal communication is made to ensure that all those involved receive a consistent and correct message about the changes.

Implementation

The appropriate Commissioner should appoint an individual to lead the implementation phase. They will need to produce an implementation plan, part of which will deal with the ongoing communication process.

The factsheet "Implementing Boundary Changes" provides further guidance on the implementation process.

Support Resources

Other factsheets that might prove useful in reviewing boundaries are:

- Implementing Boundary Changes - FS185098
- Approaching Tasks & Problems – Diagrams – FS310600

- Managing Change – FS310602
- Project Management – FS310603
- Generating Ideas – FS310604
- Objective Trees – FS310605
- Force Field Analysis – FS310606
- How to Prioritise – FS310607
- Questionnaires, Focus Groups & Interviews – FS310608

In addition, for England & Wales the Charity Commission produces a range of publications on Collaborative Working and Mergers. These may be downloaded from: http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk