

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

Eighth Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (STRUCTURAL
CHANGES) (SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION AND
AMENDMENT) ORDER 2023

Thursday 9 February 2023

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Monday 13 February 2023

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: MARTIN VICKERS

Abrahams, Debbie (*Oldham East and Saddleworth*)
(Lab)

† Bell, Aaron (*Newcastle-under-Lyme*) (Con)

Berry, Sir Jake (*Rossendale and Darwen*) (Con)

† Bruce, Fiona (*Congleton*) (Con)

† Fletcher, Colleen (*Coventry North East*) (Lab)

† Greenwood, Margaret (*Wirral West*) (Lab)

† Hughes, Eddie (*Walsall North*) (Con)

† Hunt, Jane (*Loughborough*) (Con)

† Maclean, Rachel (*Minister of State, Department for
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*)

† McDonald, Andy (*Middlesbrough*) (Lab)

† Morrissey, Joy (*Beaconsfield*) (Con)

† Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Crewe and Nantwich*) (Con)

† Neill, Sir Robert (*Bromley and Chislehurst*) (Con)

† Owen, Sarah (*Luton North*) (Lab)

Ribeiro-Addy, Bell (*Streatham*) (Lab)

† Smyth, Karin (*Bristol South*) (Lab)

† Vickers, Matt (*Stockton South*) (Con)

Jack Edwards, *Committee Clerk*

† **attended the Committee**

Eighth Delegated Legislation Committee

Thursday 9 February 2023

[MARTIN VICKERS *in the Chair*]

Draft Local Government (Structural Changes) (Supplementary Provision and Amendment) Order 2023

11.30 am

The Chair: I call the Minister to move the motion.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Minister of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Rachel Maclean): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Local Government (Structural Changes) (Supplementary Provision and Amendment) Order 2023.

I thank hon. Members, and you, Mr Vickers, for calling me. The draft instrument was laid before the House on 12 December 2022. If approved and made, it will complete the legislative requirements to implement the locally led proposals for unitarisation in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset. It will make certain provisions specific to the new unitary councils of Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness, North Yorkshire and Somerset so that there is a smooth transition from the predecessor councils to the successor councils to continue effective local government in those areas.

In March 2022, following approval from Parliament, we passed the necessary secondary legislation to implement locally led proposals for local government reorganisation in those areas. The new councils will go live on 1 April 2023. The draft order is intended to be the last statutory instrument implementing the reorganisation in those areas, and it will make all the final technical arrangements for the continuation of effective local government. I pay tribute to all the local leaders and their officers who have worked so hard to implement the restructuring in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset, which will have a number of benefits for local residents and communities. I wish the new councils all the best for a successful launch while they respond to the remaining challenges.

The draft order addresses a number of incidental, consequential, transitional and supplementary issues, which could not be addressed in the existing regulations of generic application that enable the effective implementation of all unitary authorities. These provisions need to be applied directly with respect to these particular authorities, so the order makes a number of changes. I assure the Committee that we worked closely on its drafting with local leaders and senior officers in the shadow authorities of Cumberland, Westmorland and

Furness, North Yorkshire and Somerset. We looked carefully at the issues raised and agreed that the provisions of the order meet local requirements.

In conclusion, the provisions are necessary, consequential changes in the light of the establishment of the new councils. They ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements and continued effective local government in the areas. I commend the draft order to the Committee.

11.33 am

Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Vickers. I welcome the new Minister to her place; she has made a fine first outing. I look forward to working opposite her as we go on, although experience tells me that it will not always be as smooth sailing as it is today. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the draft order, as it draws on the excellent legislation put forward by the last Labour Government. Labour in national Government empowers local government: we designed the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to make the structures of local authorities clearer and more practical.

This Government, however, have caused chaos and confusion for local authorities by demanding that they enter bidding wars against each other for the few funding pots available—a process that has been likened to “The Hunger Games” many times, and that needs to stop. They have widened regional inequalities by forcing councils to bring in more funds by raising council tax, which creates vastly more revenue in wealthier areas than others. Local communities and residents across the country are feeling fed up with decisions made in Whitehall rather than their town hall, so it is no wonder that are calling out for Labour to return to power.

The draft order is a welcome improvement to the structures in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset. Wherever we can, we must simplify and strengthen the way that local governments serve their jurisdictions, so we will not oppose it.

The Chair: The question is that the Committee has considered—sorry, I am jumping the gun; I apologise to the Committee. Minister, do you wish to respond?

11.35 am

Rachel Maclean: Very briefly, Mr Vickers. I thank the hon. Member for Luton North and look forward to many more exchanges with her. I am sure that not all of them will be as smooth sailing as today, but I am sure that they will all be conducted in the best traditions of this place, to which we are privileged to belong. I commend this order to the Committee and thank hon. Members for their consideration.

The Chair: I thank the Minister—we would not have wanted to miss out on that.

Question put and agreed to.

11.36 am

Committee rose.