



**Lewes
Town
Council**

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Minutes of the meeting of Extraordinary Meeting of Lewes Town Council held on Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 7.30 in the Council Chamber, Lewes Town Hall.

Present:

Councillor Bird (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Catlin
Councillor Clarke
Councillor Earl
Councillor Lamb
Councillor Makepeace
Councillor Maples
Councillor Mayhew
Councillor O'Keeffe
Councillor Wood

In attendance

Town Clerk
Committee Administrator

86. Chair

86.1. Due to the absence of The Mayor, Councillor Bird the Deputy Mayor was duly elected Chair for the meeting.

87. Filming of council meetings and mobile phones

87.1. The procedures were noted.

88. Apologies for absence

88.1. There were apologies from Councillors Baah, Burrows, Handy, Herbert, Milner, Sains, Vernon and Waring.

89. Members' declarations of interests

89.1. There were none.

90. Question time

90.1. There were two members of the public present. An elector from Westmeston, a nearby parish to Lewes addressed the council stressing the affinity Westmeston has with Lewes socially and economically and that the parish would not wish to be moved from the Lewes Parliamentary boundary.

91. Officers' report

91.1. Boundary Commission for England Review 2023
Council considered report FC022/2022 on the revised proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South East region which form part of

the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) Review 2023. Council were also asked to consider advice from the BCE and to explore potential counter proposals and to agree a response from the Town Council.

91.2. Lewes Town Council had responded to initial proposals in the first stage of the review. Council's initial response was not deemed acceptable by the BCE due to a proposed split through the town of Polegate and Willingdon parish, both who currently sit within the Lewes constituency.

91.3. The BCE have issued their revised proposals for the south east regions.

91.4. It was important that Lewes Town Council provides a counter proposal that ensures the electorate figures are within the parameters set by the Commission and support this with evidence of local ties such as the way in which the community shops, school catchment areas, road and public transport networks, social links etc. Planning and further development pressures, including how the community is forming could also be used to evidence interconnectedness.

91.5. Using the online plan builder from the BCE Council modelled various proposals.

91.6. Lewes Town Council proposed the following changes to the revised boundary constituencies:

- 1 Move Hartfield ward from Sussex Weald to East Grinstead and Uckfield
- 2 Move Buxted from Sussex Weald to East Grinstead and Uckfield
- 3 Move Arlington from Lewes to Sussex Weald
- 4 Move Stone Cross from Lewes to Bexhill and Battle
- 5 Move Chailey, Barcombe and Hamsey East Grinstead and Uckfield to Lewes
- 6 Move Plumpton, Streat, East Chiltington and St John East Grinstead and Uckfield to Lewes
- 7 Move Ditchling and Westmeston from East Grinstead and Uckfield to Lewes

91.7. Lewes Town Council recognises that this results in Sussex Weald being 85 under the permitted electorate range, but this is considered to be minimal in the context but given the significant development in the south east these figures will change anyway and will no doubt have done so already given these figures relate to the electorates as they were on 2 March 2020.

91.8. Of significant consideration for Lewes Town Council and submitted as evidence to support the Council's proposal were the following:

1. The revised boundary constituencies from the BCE cut across Landport Bottom which is owned by Lewes Town Council, putting this one piece of land owned by the Town Council in two constituencies. It is a priority habitat chalk grassland lying just on the edge of Lewes town and much loved by the residents of the Town and surrounding parishes. Splitting this historic and priority habitat site will require the Town Council to form a relationship and understanding with two MPs not just one, in addition to having to maintain the relationships with the South Downs National Park (SDNPA) and Lewes District Council to manage this unique site.

2. The River Ouse, of historic and cultural significance, provides a connection between these communities and Lewes Town Council feels strongly that their proposed constituency which includes the villages north of the Town be renamed "Lewes and Ouse Valley".
3. Linked to that, the River Ouse flows through the parishes of Barcombe and Hamsey, while its main east/west tributary, the Bevern Stream collects water from all the other parishes. This isn't simply a geographical fact. Expectation of housing development is particularly heavy in the area north of Lewes. Planning proposals in Plumpton, Chailey, Barcombe, Cooksbridge, Hamsey imply immense pressure on the water infrastructure and drainage. An MP will need to be very alert to the needs of villagers and downstream residents as we negotiate these challenges and make flood resilience adjustments.
4. Much of Lewes Town Council's proposal includes areas under the SDNPA which is a critical point of planning and landscape.
5. Planning and further development pressures, including how the community is forming are also evidence of the interconnectedness between our proposed Lewes and Ouse Valley constituency, best represented by one MP with a thorough understanding of their entire area.
6. The BCE itself acknowledged in its response that their proposed Lewes constituency was a controversial decision and there were clearly strong feelings in opposition to this. Lewes Town Council is aware of the strong feelings of the villages to the north of Lewes to remain in the same constituency as Lewes with many valid reasons put forward with which Lewes Town Council concurs. The strength of feeling is such that over 100 responses have been submitted by Barcombe. Residents from Barcombe and Westmeston attended the Lewes Town Council extraordinary meeting expressed their concerns about being separated from Lewes.
7. The school catchment areas provide further evidence of the intrinsic links between Lewes and the villages to the north. Both the bus services, some of which we support, and the road infrastructure including the C7 and A275 provide the spine that connect school services.
8. Shopping and access to services, including ever decreasing postal services, further demonstrate the local ties with Lewes being the focal destination for those villages to the north.
9. Dentists (all in Lewes), medical and clinical services, treatment clinics all within the Lewes constituency are accessed by the villages north of Lewes. If those villages are excluded from the Lewes constituency, they will have to contact two MPs if they wish to raise any issues relating to any of these services, no doubt falling between the net because the MP in their residential constituency isn't the MP in the constituency that the services are located in.
10. This process has identified a possible anomaly with the boundaries for the constituency based on the wards cutting across the gardens of properties in Highdown Road. In fact in one map the properties themselves seem to

be split between two wards which cannot be correct and should be examined.

91.9. **It was resolved that:**

- 1 Delegated Authority be given to the Town Clerk to respond to the Boundary Commission response by 2 December 2022 as detailed in minutes 91.6 to 91.8 above.
- 2 A vote of thanks was recorded to Councillor Makepeace and the Town Clerk for research carried out on the Boundary Commission for England Review 2023 prior to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 20:35pm.

Signed..... Dated.....