



**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON
MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Members	Councillor Nigel North (Chairman)
Present:	Councillor Tim Pearson, Wansford Parish Council Councillor John Stannage, Wansford Parish Council Councillor Neil Boyce, Castor Parish Council Councillor Joan Pickett, Ailsworth Parish Council Councillor Keith Liversley, Ufford Parish Council Councillor Henry Clarke, Peakirk Parish Council Councillor Jason Merrill, Bretton Parish Council Councillor Jane Hill, Deeping Gate Parish Council Sandra Hudspeth, Deeping Gate Parish Council Councillor Peter Hiller, PCC Councillor John Bartlett, Thorney Parish Council Councillor Sue Welch, Marholm Parish Council Michael Perkins, Ashton Resident Richard Buck, Local Government Boundary Commission England Councillor Vijay Patel, Hampton Parish Council Councillor Diane Lamb, PCC Councillor John Holdich, PCC Councillor Paul Froggitt, Orton Waterville Parish Council Councillor Mike Chambers, Orton Waterville Parish Council Councillor R Perkins, Ailsworth Parish Council
Officers	Kim Sawyer, Director of Governance
Present:	Cate Harding, Communities, PCC Dania Castagliuolo, -Governance Officer, PCC

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Olive Leonard, Hampton Parish Council
Councillor Ian Allin, Orton Waterville Parish Council
Councillor Ian Pratt, Hampton Parish Council
Councillor Marion Sharp, Hampton Parish Council
Councillor Richard Clark, Wansford Parish Council
Sarah Rodger, Castor Parish Council
Kate Day, Hampton Parish Council

2. Ward Boundary Review

Councillor John Holdich addressed the meeting and advised the group that Peterborough City Council had decided to push ahead with the existing proposals.

Councillor Henry Clark, Chairman of Peakirk Parish Council and Chairman of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils, delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the group on the Ward Boundary Review. The following key points were highlighted:

Effects on Rural Wards

The proposed changes were:

- Barnack added Wittering, Northborough Glington, Helpston, Maxey and Eton.
- Eye, Thorney and Newborough added Peakirk, Borough Fen, Newborough and Eye Green.
- West mixed rural and urban areas – Sutton, Wansford, Upton Castor, Ailsworth with Longthorpe and South Bretton.
- North Bretton gained Marholm, although they had different needs and identity.

The following was identified with three member wards:

- They were inappropriate for low population densities.
- Covered large areas.
- Forced together communities with different identities and needs.
- The administrative election would be a convenience for Peterborough City Council.

Alternative Arrangements could be:

- One member wards where possible – the benefits of this would be:
 - Better identification with the ward Councillor.
 - The ward Councillor would know his patch better.
 - There would be a smaller area to cover.
 - There would be more commonality between communities in the ward.
- Two member wards where necessary
- Less emphasis on exact 'Electoral Equality' and more on 'Community Interests and Identity'
- Three member wards were not necessary for 'Effective and Convenient Local Government'

Councillor Henry Clark advised the group that the consultation deadline was **6 October 2014** and Parishes should make their views known along with supporting evidence to the Local Government Boundary Commission England at:

- <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/2371>
- reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The final recommendations would be decided on 20 January 2015.

Richard Buck, Review Manager, local Government Boundary Commission England gave the group some background as to why the uniform pattern of three member wards had been recommended in the draft recommendations:

- In the 2009 Local Government Act, legislation changed and there was now a presumption that where an authority elected by thirds it would have a uniform pattern of three member wards. Where an authority elected by wholes, it could have one or two member wards. This was to allow all to have an equal chance to vote every year.
- The uniform pattern of three member wards was a presumption only. The key objective was for good, strong, compelling evidence to be presented in order to move away from this pattern.
- There were three criteria that the Local Government Boundary Commission adhered to:

1. Electoral Equality
 2. Community Identities and Interests
 3. Effective and Convenient Local Government.
- In terms of the consultation period the Local Government Boundary Commission would be looking for good, strong evidence as to why three member wards did not provide for 'Effective and Convenient Local Government'. How would it make it difficult for Councillors to represent the area, and for local residents to have clear and easy access to electorate representatives? Why would a large ward provide difficulties in terms of effectively representing the whole of those communities?
 - In terms of Community identities the Local Government Boundary Commission accepted that historical evidence of strong associations or lack of associations were important and gave a sense of where a community laid.
 - The Local Government Boundary Commission would be looking for practical day to day examples of how communities interacted today. For example if a particular area had been split between wards, it would be important to give examples of how the areas interacted on a day to day basis, did they have shared facilities, amenities, social events etc.
 - The Commission wanted to ensure that each ward had good, clear communication links and was easy to traverse from one end to the other.
 - The group was advised that in the few weeks left of the consultation they should advise the Commission of not only what they did not like about the recommendations but also why they thought the recommendations were wrong, how they could be better along with evidence to support it.
 - On the Local Government Boundary Commission website it was possible to see examples of where the Commission had moved away from the uniform pattern of three member wards, where it had felt it had sufficient evidence to do so.

The following questions and comments were put to Richard Buck:

In the recommendations it stated that North Bretton would gain Marholm, this was concerning as one was an urban area and one was rural.

There were already three city Councillors in North Bretton, with the proposals in the recommendations of North Bretton gaining Marholm would this mean that there would be six city Councillors within the ward?

There were situations where it was required that a parished area was split between more than one ward and consequently could be represented by more than three cohesive city Councillors

North Bretton and Marholm were completely different areas, due to one being an urban and one being a rural area.

This was a good point and the Commission required to know which communities shouldn't go together and why. It was essential that evidence was submitted.

Thorney was the biggest geographical area within the city Council. It was currently keyed in with Eye, which should be classed as an urban area due to its rapid expansion. To include Newborough in this would be wrong.

The Commission did not necessarily take the view that urban and rural should never go together, urban and rural areas did sometimes share a sense of Community Interest in terms of rural residents using more urban facilities within a particular area.

Why were the roles of city Councillors increased to 60?

Liaison with the Local Authority was carried out to establish what was required from them, in terms of representational roles and how business was carried out internally. From this the Commission came to the conclusion, based on the evidence given, that it should be 60 Members.

The main concern when the review started was with parishes providing evidence that three member wards were wrong. Marholm, Castor and Ailsworth had been giving reasons why they worked better together as a community with shared facilities, schools and events. Was the angle now to be changed as new boundaries and associations had been suggested which were different to the way the Commission had drawn them up?

When consultation closed, the Commission would take the submission in to account and the evidence provided. It could only be stressed that there was a need to provide day to day examples of why the communities referred to interacted and why there was a specific community within the ward your parish was placed in, whereby communities did not interact. This would need to be supported by strong evidence.

Whose decision was it with regards to whether the Council would have a three or four year election cycle and was this present review then not prejudicing the actions of the future Council? An independent view of it should be taken.

The decision in terms of cycles was with the city Council, the Commission had no involvement with that. The new electoral arrangements would be implemented with an all-out election. The Commission did not have a view on whether thirds or whole Council elections would be beneficial or not. The Commission came back and reviewed Peterborough once every ten or twenty years.

Councillor North (Chairman) advised the group that it was decided at a full Council meeting that Peterborough would have a three year cycle, this decision was not challenged, the decision was unanimous.

The Commission was asking parishes to outline why urban and rural areas were different, this did not require discussion as the reasons were obvious.

The Commission did not make presumptions about this, there had been many situations where the Commission had recommended urban and rural areas coming together in one ward and there had been a Community Interest. As parishes knew their areas better than the Commission it was up to them to advise the Commission on why they had got the recommendations wrong and how they would be better under a different configuration of ward boundaries.

Councillor North stressed that it was important to pass good evidence over to the Commission as the Commission were not familiar with areas in Peterborough.

Were the figures for the electoral roll on the Commission's website from Peterborough's local elections, as they were different?

The electoral figures were obtained from Peterborough City Council.

The Ward Boundary Review was not suggesting any changes or alterations to Parish Councils, it was recommending warding the parish.

Orton Waterville presently had five wards and the proposal was to change this, when there was no issue with present arrangements

Changes to parish electoral arrangements could only be made as a direct consequence of warding arrangements with the city Council.

There was confusion on how to respond to the Commission's proposals. If the City Council maintained a three year election cycle then the Commission would not accommodate a one member ward?

In legislation there was a presumption that there would be a uniform pattern of a three member ward, this was not absolute. The Commission's starting point would be to secure a pattern of three member wards, unless evidence was received to suggest that it did not meet the criteria.

Ailsworth were very happy with the current arrangements of being a two Councillor ward, adding South Bretton and Gunthorpe would make it only 25% rural.

This was to be told to the Commission by way of submission, if not then the Commission would not be aware of these issues.

When it came to elections, with three quarters of the electorate suddenly becoming urban, the city Councillors would clearly require the votes in their elections and they would be able to obtain three quarters of the urban votes, this could mean that rural councillors missed out. Does the Commission not take this in to account?

The Commission made no assumption on these matters.

Councillor Holdich addressed the group and advised that he had a spreadsheet of all comments which parish councillors had made. There were five different parties within the council and to get unanimous agreement for this submission was rare. The Commission had looked at the Community Interests side of things and as far as rural were concerned they would be asked to stick with how things were and to submit their evidence to the Commission before the end of the consultation.

Kim Sawyer, Director of Governance advised the group that the Boundary Review Working Group had decided to stick with the Councils original proposals and asked for the support of Parish Councils with this submission. Copies of the original submission would be circulated to parishes.

Henry Clark addressed the group and commented that he was not persuaded that three member wards were the right thing for rural areas, because of the geographical size and the lack of fairness of dominating urban, bigger areas. He urged parishes to put in submissions of what they thought best suited their community and do their best to justify it.

CHAIRMAN
6:30 – 7:20pm

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