

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD AT SWANSPool HOUSE, WELLINGBOROUGH
ON THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2016**

Present: The Mayor, Councillor M Waters, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Graves, and Councillors Allebone, Bailey, Bell, Carr, Ekins, Emerson, Gough, Griffiths, Hallam, G Lawman, L Lawman, Lloyd, Partridge-Underwood, Simmons, Scarborough, Skittrall, Stevenson, Ward and V Waters.

Officers present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mrs B Gamble, Head of Resources, Mr G Hollands, Solicitor, District Law, Miss K Denton, Principal Corporate Support Manager, Mr S Whiteley, Electoral Services Team Leader, Mr G Betts, Mayor's Sergeant and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Abram, Anslow, Aslam, Beirne, Bone, Harrington, Maguire, Patel, Scanlon, Walia, Watts and York.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the following declaration was made:

Name of Councillor	Item	Interest
Gough	3 – Review of Parliamentary boundaries 2016	Other – is employed by the Member of Parliament for Corby – will speak but won't vote.

3. REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARIES 2016

The annexed circulated exempt report of the Head of Resources was received to consider the council's response to the review of parliamentary boundary proposals made by the Boundary Commission for England, the response to which required submission by 5 December 2016.

The report detailed the proposals contained within the review, which would have a significant effect on the constituents of the existing Wellingborough Constituency. The criteria used by the boundary commission along with a map showing the proposed boundary for the Wellingborough Constituency were appended to the report.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) had set a target whereby each MP should represent approximately equal numbers of electors within the range 71,031 to 78,507 per constituency.

The BCE had focused on four criteria in the decision making process as follows:

- Special geographical consideration, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- Local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015;
- Boundaries of existing constituencies;
- Local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

The report referred to the issues of concern that had been raised on each of these, and on which members elaborated during the meeting.

Accessibility would become an issue for many residents; residents of Earls Barton had already expressed their concern at being part of the Daventry constituency; to become part of Lutterworth would feel even more remote particularly as it was out of county.

With regard to the boundaries of existing constituencies, the borough of Wellingborough would experience the most change in the whole of Northamptonshire, with five wards being 'given away' and the borough being divided into four constituencies. This would potentially mean that issues in the borough could require the involvement of four Members of Parliament.

Members asserted that, by dividing the borough into four, many local ties would be broken. Finedon and villages to the north are very close to the Wellingborough town boundary, and new developments to the east and north of the town would result in neighbours being represented by different MPs. Harrowden and Sywell/Earls Barton wards would be represented by an MP whose base was likely to be in another county. Wollaston and Bozeat would be some distance from the centre of Northampton South constituency, despite being closer to Wellingborough.

The report detailed the areas that would be affected and the impact this would have:

- Finedon ward would become part of the proposed Kettering parliamentary constituency;
- Harrowden and Sywell ward would become part of the proposed Daventry and Lutterworth constituency;
- Wollaston and Bozeat wards would become part of the proposed Northampton South constituency;
- Irthlingborough Waterloo and Irthlingborough John Pyel wards would become part of the proposed Wellingborough constituency.

The leader of the council opened the report for debate.

A lengthy discussion ensued with members raising their concerns for their individual wards and for the borough in general.

Such concerns included the following:

- The lack of logic in moving Finedon ward to Kettering constituency and replacing it with wards from Irthlingborough;
- Earls Barton and Harrowden & Sywell wards potentially having an MP based in Lutterworth;
- There would be four separate constituencies for the borough.
- Constituents in Earls Barton already experienced confusion as they had an MP based in Daventry when they considered themselves to be part of Wellingborough.
- There was no interaction with Daventry on any level by the constituents of Harrowden and Sywell or Earls Barton.
- There was a natural gravitation to Wellingborough, and the villages within the borough needed to remain in the Wellingborough constituency.
- Residents of Bozeat and Wollaston had no natural links to Northampton south and should remain as part of Wellingborough.
- Councillors understood that each constituency needed to be of similar numbers; however they considered that the suggestions were unworkable and would split communities and create too much confusion. They considered that the changes were very damaging and there were better options that could be considered. Care also needed to be taken with regard to geographical areas, including schools and potential splitting of areas where people living in neighbouring streets could have a different MP.
- Reference was also made to the changes that had taken place with county council electoral divisions at the last review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, and had not been taken into account by the BCE at the current review;
- Members felt strongly that people and communities wanted to remain together. Bozeat, Wollaston and the other villages had nothing in common with Northampton South; they were part of the borough of Wellingborough and wished to remain in the Wellingborough constituency.

The leader of the council thanked members for the opening discussion.

He proposed that the motion contained in the report be put, together with the following additional clause:

“That this council fully supports the counter-proposal made by Northamptonshire MPs”.

Councillor Scarborough asked for exact detail of the counter-proposal.

Councillor Griffiths clarified this as follows:

Irthlingborough would remain as part of the Corby constituency;
Finedon would remain as part of the Wellingborough constituency;
Bozeat and Wollaston would also remain within the Wellingborough constituency;
Harrowden and Sywell ward would go to Daventry and Lutterworth constituency.

Councillors raised concern over this option as they considered that this did not reflect the views of local people.

The Chief Executive addressed the meeting. He concluded that some excellent points had been made during the discussion and he sought clarity from members that they wished to reject entirely the proposal.

On considering this Councillor Griffiths withdrew his original proposal and proposed that the motion be put with the addition of the following:

“That this council totally rejects the Boundary Commission for England’s proposal for the Wellingborough constituency and seeks further consideration of the entire matter.”

This was seconded by Councillor Scarborough.

On being put to the vote the motion, together with the additional clause, was unanimously declared carried.

(Councillor Gough did not vote on this item.)

RESOLVED that the following concerns be relayed to the Boundary Commission for England in relation to the review of parliamentary constituencies 2018

- (I) That this council totally rejects the Boundary Commission for England’s proposal for the Wellingborough constituency and seeks further consideration of the entire matter;
- (II) that the division of the borough of Wellingborough between four parliamentary constituencies, thus further losing the identity of the borough as a historical and well understood unit;
- (III) that the linkage of part of the borough to an area of Leicestershire, as part of an extensive rural constituency, which lacks cohesion, threatens accessibility and breaks local ties;
- (IV) The fragmenting of a long standing and understood constituency simply to accommodate numerical compliance for those around it.

Mayor

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.