

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL, GUILDHALL SQUARE, PORTSMOUTH PO1 2AB

ON

THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Mr Colin Byrne, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

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83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW
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Time Noted: 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is the third public hearing of the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituencies in the South East region. My name is Colin Byrne. I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the South East region. I am responsible for chairing today's hearing and I am also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioners, Alan Nisbett and Stephen Lawes, for analysing all the representations received on the initial proposals for this region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff led by Glenn Reed. Glenn will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's proposals for new constituencies in this region. He will tell you how to make written representations and he will deal with one or two administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10.00 am now until 8.00 pm, and tomorrow is scheduled to run from 9 till 5. I can vary that timetable and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak. I should point out that under the legislation that governs the Commission's review each public hearing must be held over two days and cannot be extended into a third.

The purpose of this public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the South East region. A number of people have already registered to speak and been given a time slot and I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. I will also invite anyone who has not registered but who would like to speak to do so. I would like to stress the purpose of the public hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals, the purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals, nor is this a hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers but they should do so through me as Chair.

I will now hand over to Glenn, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the South East region.

MR REED: Thank you very much and good morning. As Colin has mentioned, my name is Glenn Reed and I am a member of the Commission's staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Colin has already stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and to take decisions about

speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here to support Colin today in carrying out his role but please ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for new constituency boundaries which were published on 13 September 2016. We use the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, not including the two constituencies to be allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counter-proposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the regions but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional-based approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals. In considering the composition of each electoral region we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, therefore we have grouped some local authority areas into sub-regions. The Commission's proposals for the South East are for 83 constituencies, a reduction of one. Our proposals leave 15 of the existing constituencies unchanged, and we propose only minor changes to a further 47 constituencies, with two wards or fewer altered from the existing constituencies.

The rules that we work to state we must allocate two constituencies to the Isle of Wight. Neither of these constituencies is required to have an electorate that is within the requirements on electoral size set out in the rules.

In more detail, in Berkshire two of the eight existing constituencies are unchanged while four are changed only by the transfer of one ward. In Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Kent and Medway, two of the existing 25 constituencies are unaltered and one is reconfigured slightly due to re-warding; a further four are altered only by the transfer of one ward. In Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, one of the seven existing constituencies is unchanged. In Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton, three of the 18 existing constituencies are unaltered while a further four are altered only by the transfer of one ward. In the county of Oxfordshire, one of the six existing constituencies is unchanged while one is changed only by the transfer of one ward. In Surrey, five of the existing 11 constituencies are unaltered while three of the remaining six are altered only by the transfer of one ward. Finally, in West Sussex, of the existing eight constituencies, one of those constituencies is unchanged and one is reconfigured slightly due to re-warding. A further five are changed only by the transfer of one ward.

As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, we have grouped some county and local authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities. Consequently, it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries.

We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from Brighton and Hove and East Sussex; it crosses the boundary on the south coast, combining the east of the city of Brighton and Hove with Newhaven and Seaford. We propose one constituency that contains electors from East Sussex and Kent; it crosses the boundary at the Weald, combining the towns of Crowborough and Tenterden. We further propose two constituencies that contain electors from Kent and Medway: one crosses the boundary at Higham, combining it with Rochester, and the other at Chatham, combining it with East and West Malling.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries (known as “wards” or “electoral divisions”). We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any disruption of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers who are responsible for running elections. It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances would splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of such ward-splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 5 December so there is still plenty of time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at the hearing and they are available on our website and in a number of places of deposit throughout the region. Written representations could be made to us through our consultation website at www.bce2018.org.uk and I would urge everyone to submit written representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see behind you, we are taking a video recording from which we will create a verbatim transcript. The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing, along with all written representations, for a four-week period during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations will include certain personal details of those who have made representations. I therefore invite all those contributing to read the Commission’s data protection and privacy policy, a copy of which we have with us and is available on our website.

Before I hand you back to Colin, I just want to say that we have no planned fire alarms while we are here so if we do hear the alarms go off it means that it is the real thing. Please evacuate by the exits behind you, go down the stairs, and we will assemble. We turn right and assemble by the purple door in front of the Union in Guildhall Walk.

That is all I have to say at this stage, so I am going to hand you back to Colin and we will begin the public hearing. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have our first representation. If you would not mind coming up to the podium and, as Glenn said, if you could just, for the record, give us your name and where you are from.

MS MORAN: My name is Mary Moran. I live here in Portsmouth. Do not be fooled by my accent. I did grow up in Scotland but I now live in Portsmouth and this is my home. I do not represent any political party, I am not a member of any party, I am just a member of the public who wanted to come along and have a say. Shall I begin?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please.

MS MORAN: I have got two main concerns about these proposals. My first concern is that there is an important principle about a sitting Government using its power to make changes to our democracy in a way that is favourable to it, so I think that is concerning. Regardless of the reality of whether that might be beneficial to the sitting party, I think there is an important principle at stake about Governments not being able to change the fundamental way that our democracy works while they are in power. That is my first concern.

My second concern is that we have got a political culture where people are very disengaged and a lot of people, millions of people, votes do not count, they do not have a voice. I feel that changing, making these tinkering around the system that we have in a way that helps the current party that is in power and does nothing to address that lack of voice that millions of people have with the way that our voting system is, I think just further damages that sense of disengagement and that sense of reality from people in politics and people on the ground, particularly for the millions of people whose votes do not translate into any representation. I know that that particular matter is outwith the scope of what you are looking at, but I think it is relevant from the point of view of we do have a problem with our voting system, and making these small tinkering changes at the edges I think just further gives people a sense that nobody is trying to address the fact that they do not have a voice in the system.

I also think that your Commission could make recommendations that actually what the Government needs to do, rather than making tinkering at the edges to the current system, is do a fundamental "stop and look" at what has happened, how has our society changed,

and what is it that we now need to have in terms of a voting system and a democracy that means that everybody can have a voice. While that is not within your remit, I think you could recommend that. As I say, I think that that is one of the reasons, that overall culture and that overall problem is one of the reasons why I think that making these changes is damaging, that and the principle of a sitting government being able to change how people can vote and how the system works.

That is really all I have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for those representations and they are now on the record.

MS MORAN: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So they will be looked at along with all the other representations, and do feel free to put in a written representation by 5 December.

MS MORAN: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I should just ask anybody on the floor whether they have a point of clarification they want to ask. (None) If not, then thank you very much for taking the time to come and make those points to us.

MS MORAN: Okay. Thanks.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We do not have any other speakers until 11.50 am, so what I propose to do is to adjourn until 11.00 am in case somebody comes in off the street. We will reconvene at 11.00 am. If nobody has come in, then we will just adjourn again until 11:50 am. We are now adjourned.

After a short adjournment

Time Noted: 11.00 am

MR WHINERAY: Good morning. My name is Philip Whineray and I come from Fareham in Hampshire. I am not a member or affiliated to any particular political party but it is one of these things I have been interested in is parliamentary constituencies and seeing that our Government works according to a set of principles. I have been to a number of these consultations in the past, probably going back to the 1980s; in fact I think I have been to every one in Hampshire and some in West Sussex. Normally I am standing complaining or making suggestions; this time I am pleased to say that I have made the effort to come along and say I actually support everything that the Commission has done.

In general I support the Government's plan to reduce the MPs from 650 to 600, although that is outside the remit of this meeting. I support having constituencies of equal size throughout the country. I think the 5 per cent leeway you have is a bit on the tight side personally, but there you are, I can live with that. Therefore I support Hampshire having a reduction of 18 to 17 constituencies.

Last time I stood here in 2012, the first meeting we had there was a lot of controversy because people generally did not like what the parliamentary Boundary Commissioners did, but they took on board a lot of what people said and the revised constituencies I thought were very good. I think that these initial proposals are more or less based on what those revised constituencies are, therefore I also think they are pretty good.

In my own particular area - I am in the Fareham constituency - last time Gosport had to expand to take in a ward from Fareham, Titchfield, which happened to be the ward that I live in, but this time I see that the figures are slightly different and Gosport can remain unchanged, therefore my ward remains in Fareham. So Fareham now only has to slightly expand by taking in Whitely, which I think is very sensible, so I am all in favour of that and I am sure our MP is, too. That consequently means that Eastleigh is more or less unchanged and that there is a ripple effect throughout Hampshire.

Last time, initially in Southampton the wards were split up across four constituencies in the initial proposals and people stood up in this room and they did not like that at all. Then the Boundary Commission went back and changed it and I believe there were two wholly within Southampton and a couple of wards were outside. Now the figures work out so Southampton can be divided equally amongst two constituencies and I imagine everybody is quite happy.

Last time there was quite a bit of controversy in Portsmouth. There was no way the figures could add up to keep a more or less static Portsmouth South, the figures did not work out within the 5 per cent rule. Therefore they proposed a Portsmouth East and a Portsmouth West and nobody was particularly happy, and there was various schemes, adjust here, adjust that, but nobody was happy, but there you are, you had to have it. This time I see the figures do work out so that Portsmouth South can stay more or less the same, which is good. That means Portsmouth North can stay more or less the same, albeit taking in a couple of wards of Havant - that is fine - which means that Havant can go back to its old shape of keeping most of Havant within one constituency which is good; I imagine they are happy. Therefore that means that East Hampshire can go back to being more or less as it used to be. There you are, I imagine everybody is happy. So everybody is happy, hence there is very few people here today.

I just stand here and give my quick support for everything. I do not mind if a particular ward gets swapped between constituency A and B, that is up to the people in Portsmouth or wherever. I understand that for a particular ward in Portsmouth there might be an argument about swapping wards between Portsmouth South and Portsmouth North. But

I just thought I would make the effort, come down from Fareham - here I am - and say, "I agree with you. Well done, Boundary Commission. Get on with the job".

I am not personally a great supporter of a first-past-the-post system. I think there are better ways of electing our MPs, but there you go; that is not in the remit of this meeting. But given that we do have first past the post, I do think that everything has to be good, everything has got to be clean and everything has got to be fair, and I think these set of proposals are just that.

Thank you very much for listening to me, and that is my little speech.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I just pause to see if anybody has a question. No.

MR WHINERAY: I can see the anger seething.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, but we do appreciate you coming and particularly for your support with our proposals.

MR WHINERAY: Okay. All right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed.

MR WHINERAY: Yes. If I was elsewhere in the country, I am sure it would be quite a different matter altogether. Sleepy Hampshire goes on again.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We do not have another speaker until 11.50 so I am going to adjourn until 11.50. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 11.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome. The way it operates is you have ten minutes each to make your presentations. Because we are recording the event, when you start your presentation, if you could just say who you are and where you are from. After your ten minutes we open the floor for questions of clarification only, so if somebody in the audience has a point of clarification, or indeed if I have a point of clarification, then we will ask it, but it is not meant to start a debate; we are not into that. Really that is all the ground rules, so, Mr Lewzey, if you want to kick us all off.

CLLR LEWZEY: Thank you very much. Is it up here? (indicating)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is. If you just stand at the lectern, that would be brilliant.

CLLR LEWZEY: Can you hear me okay? Great stuff. My name is Paul Lewzey. I am a city councillor for Peartree ward in Southampton, in Southampton Itchen. I actually live in the middle of the ward, too, and Peartree ward itself is in the middle of Southampton Itchen constituency.

I would very much like to support the Boundary Commission proposals; they do seem the right thing to do. I support having two constituencies that exactly match the City Council area, which the proposed two constituencies would; the population numbers do seem to work okay, which is reassuring; and that makes it possible for the two Southampton MPs that we would have, and the city councillors, to work together most efficiently for the benefit of all the people of the city. The inclusion of Swaythling and Bassett wards in Romsey and Southampton North constituency as it currently exists has often created a certain amount of confusion that would be avoided by the proposed changes. That is slightly problematic. Having three constituencies in the city has been a bit of a problem at times. The MP for Romsey and Southampton North has a constituency that kind of ends right on the edge of the university area, which is problematic really.

The Itchen constituency currently includes both city centre and suburban areas, so very urban and suburban, so the addition of Bevois ward would be entirely appropriate because that is right on the edge of the inner city. For Bevois and Bargate wards, the change obviously proposed is that Bevois would move into Itchen. Bevois and Bargate wards do share characteristics and they are right next to each other; they share quite a long boundary. Bargate shares a similar waterfront character with Woolston ward, which is just over the water. They are each side of the River Itchen which is the main artery through the city in terms of water. Bargate and Bevois are connected by some really significant road bridges: we have the new Itchen Bridge which was built a few years ago and allows shipping to go under it, but is a really substantial piece of bridge architecture and lets people move very easily between the different bits of the city; and for Bevois ward there is a similar bridge, not quite so high, that actually connects Bevois to areas around Bitterne Park and Peartree, so it fits quite neatly.

There has been an alternative mooted by others for the inclusion of Bassett and Swaythling wards in Itchen; that really does not seem to make a lot of sense. It is much less desirable since the road links for Swaythling with Bitterne Park ward, I mean one of them is just a very narrow single-track bridge which is really quite problematic, and the other route that you would take actually takes you through chunks of Eastleigh borough and Hampshire county area, so it is quite problematic. There is no real commonality of interest between Swaythling and Bitterne Park, whereas there is quite a lot of commonality between Swaythling and Portswood and Bassett wards. The inclusion of Bassett in Itchen really makes no sense at all since Bassett has significant commonalities with other parts of the north of the city and the central part of Test, including Coxford,

Shirley and Portswood. There is a lot of commonality there really so it does make a great deal of sense.

Overall, I would suggest that the Boundary Commission proposals for Southampton make very good sense. Inclusion of Bevois in Southampton Itchen and inclusion of Swaythling and Bassett in Test is the most desirable adjustment.

That is it from me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Does anybody have any points of clarification?

MR WHINERAY: If I understand ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because this is all being recorded, you have to say who you are again for the record.

MR WHINERAY: Can I sit down?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You can sit down, yes.

MR WHINERAY: I am Philip Whineray from Fareham.

CLLR LEWZEY: Hello.

MR WHINERAY: As I understand it, Itchen contains six wards at the moment.

CLLR LEWZEY: Seven.

MR WHINERAY: Seven?

CLLR LEWZEY: Yes.

MR WHINERAY: Now there is a proposal adding an eighth ward.

CLLR LEWZEY: Yes.

MR WHINERAY: Which you support?

CLLR LEWZEY: Yes.

MR WHINERAY: You talked about the Itchen Bridge.

CLLR LEWZEY: Yes.

MR WHINERAY: But on the east side of the Itchen there is only Woolston ward.

CLLR LEWZEY: No, you have got Woolston and Sholing and Peartree.

MR WHINERAY: Oh, right. Okay.

CLLR LEWZEY: And Bitterne and Bitterne Park and Harefield actually.

MR WHINERAY: Yes, I am with you. Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Anybody else? No? Thank you very much for coming in.

CLLR LEWZEY: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next representative is Mrs Sharon Mintoff.

CLLR MINTOFF: Hello. I am Sharon Mintoff. I am a Swaythling city councillor in Southampton. Just to say that I think the Boundary Commission proposals do make sense. As my colleague Cllr Lewzey has said, it means that the two Southampton proposed constituencies would be contiguous with the City Council boundary, which does make an awful lot of sense.

The numbers, there are sort of two possibilities that were numerically possible, and I think that what the Boundary Commission has proposed makes sense more than the other one for geographic reasons. Bassett and Swaythling are obviously west of the river and have an awful lot in common with Portswood ward immediately to the south, whereas putting Bassett and Swaythling into Itchen and moving Bargate into Test, the far western edge of Bassett is next door to Coxford which is one of the most western wards of the city.

On the numbers there are five wards in the city that have a high transient population, they are, in order: Bargate, Swaythling, Bassett, Bevois and Portswood. Bargate is the largest, with Swaythling being the second highest, so putting both of those wards into the same constituency could skew the numbers because of the increasing number of purpose-built student accommodation in those two wards. So from the numeric point of view it makes sense that Bevois moves into Itchen, so Bargate and Bevois are the first and fourth, with the largest transient population being moved into the same constituency, with Bassett and Swaythling being moved into Test. Additionally, there is a community that is currently split between Bassett and Swaythling, it has its own identity. Although it is currently split between two different city council wards, it is one community and they should both be in the same constituency. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just to check, does anybody have a question? No? Oh, sorry.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LAWES: The community you just referred to ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ah ---

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LAWES: Sorry. I have to say who I am.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have got to say who you are.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LAWES: Stephen Lawes. I am one of the Assistant Commissioners for the South East. Just a point of very simple clarification: the community referred to that straddles those two wards, what is it known as and just say something about it, please.

CLLR MINTOFF: The community of the Flower Roads. It is sort of partially council, partially formerly council. It is an area of high deprivation. I hope that clarifies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thank you very much indeed. Our third speaker.

CLLR LETTS: Cllr Simon Letts. I am the Leader of Southampton City Council. I am here with my two colleagues and we, you will be delighted to know, have the same broad view.

Historically, the Boundary Commission has at this stage of the process got it very wrong. In the past it has attempted to divvy up bits of Southampton to the rural hinterland for no rational reason, so we are absolutely delighted that that mistake has not been made on this occasion, and we have eight and eight city wards within the two city constituencies. It makes the political administration of the city far easier for us, setting aside how much easier it makes it in terms of dealing with the party political administration of the city which is, of course, of no interest to you. The principle we have here having decided to go for eight and eight is which eight should be in which seat. There were two options on the numbers and Sharon, who is our numbers expert, has worked that out for us and we are supportive of the proposal that the Boundary Commission have put forward of basically placing the Bevois ward, which is currently in Test, in the new Itchen seat and placing Swaythling and Bassett, which currently sit in Southampton North and Romsey, within the new Test seat. The reasons for that are - I will repeat and emphasise - Bevois and Bargate are the two inner-city wards in the city. They in fact historically have been treated in many ways as the same by the Council. We had SRB2 (Single Regeneration Budget 2), which stretched across both those communities, and the reason for that is the commonality of interest, the same levels of deprivation and the same issues in terms of multiple indices of deprivation that apply to both seats. As well as that, the connectivity between the two sides of what would be the new Itchen seat is far stronger in the southern

parts of the city. Both the Itchen and the Northam Bridge, which are the principal traffic routes into the city centre, will connect the two separate parts of the new Itchen seat and I think that is important in terms of connectivity. If you look at Portswood and Bassett and Swaythling, they are, I would call them, the three university seats. Effectively, they surround the university campus which sits at the centre of those three seats and combining them together makes it very much more simple for an MP to operate. The issues that affect universities and students will be dealt with by one MP rather than the current situation where they are dealt with by two. I think that would be much easier in terms of that relationship, which is absolutely crucial to the city's economy and the future of the city in getting that relationship right.

So we have the alternative proposal which is to basically put Swaythling and Bassett in with the current eastern Itchen wards and remove Bargate which makes less sense. Geographically, it is much more of a stretched situation. There is considerable distance between the very northern part of the Bassett ward and the very southern part of the Woolston ward, and there are no logical connections between them.

On balance of the arguments, I am supportive, as are my colleagues, of the Boundary Commission proposal, which is the first time in five of these that we have actually been in lockstep with you, which is excellent news.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any questions? No? May I offer you congratulations in being in keeping with the Boundary Commission and every success with your shopping trip.

CLLR LETTS: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is at 12.30 pm so we will adjourn until 12.30 pm. Thank you.

After an adjournment

At 12.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No sign of Mr Martin Lough? He has not booked in? We will just wait and see.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 12.51 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What time is it? 12.51 pm. It is going to be timed out in a minute.

MR REED: Yes, I think so. He is not coming far.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No.

After an adjournment

Time noted: 1.13 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is now 13:13. I think we will wait until twenty past and, if they have not shown up, then we will adjourn and we will come back at 2.30 pm. If they are here, then we will hear their submissions. We will wait until twenty past.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: A third time and last time. We will adjourn until 2.30 pm.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will resume. Just so you are aware, you have ten minutes.

CLLR POPE: (English Futures Party) Okay, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have to speak at the lectern there. When you start, if you could say who you are and where you are from. At the end, if we had an audience, they may ask you questions. Or I might ask you questions or one of my colleagues, but it would only be for clarification purposes.

CLLR POPE: Good afternoon. My name is Cllr Andrew Pope. I am leader of the English Futures Party, a party registered with the Electoral Commission and founded in Southampton last year in 2015. I am speaking on behalf of the party today. I am speaking only about Hampshire and Isle of Wight constituencies.

First I want to speak about the proposed changes to the three Southampton constituencies. I have been a resident of Southampton for ten years. I have been a councillor for around five and a half years on Southampton City Council. During all these years, I have wondered why Bassett and Swaythling wards of the Council are not in the two main Southampton constituencies, Southampton Test and Southampton Itchen. These proposals clear that up, they are very sensible, and I thoroughly support them. Obviously, as you know, instead they are with the Romsey and Southampton North

constituency, which is very, very odd to local people and very, very odd to the people of Romsey as well I am sure, so it clears those up. I fully support those proposals for Southampton Test and Southampton Itchen and Romsey and Southampton North to change in the ways suggested. The minor change of Bevois ward moving to Itchen, I understand why that needs to be done, so I fully support the proposals for those three constituencies of Southampton.

Moving on to paragraph 71 in the proposals, I am not sure if it is for similar reasons to clarification of Southampton constituencies - and I understand the huge task that the Boundary Commission has to try to balance things out - there are still two wards within New Forest East and New Forest West which would be good if it could all come under New Forest District Council but I understand perhaps why that is not the case. But maybe there is another way, I am sure you have looked at many different ways, so I am going to go away and have a bit of a look at that and may do a separate submission on New Forest East and New Forest West.

In terms of the Portsmouth changes, my comments are similar to my comments on New Forest East and New Forest West. It is still a bit bitty, but you guys and girls have a very difficult job trying to balance these things out in terms of the numbers so I understand that, so I am going to go away and have a bit of a look at those as well. So that is Portsmouth North and Portsmouth South, Fareham and Havant.

Finally, I support the proposal to split the Isle of Wight into two constituencies: that makes absolute sense, it is too big. It does seem to be far too big just for the one and that is the view of a lot of the people on the Isle of Wight I understand from speaking to loads of people.

That is all I have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Thanks very much. I will just ask my colleagues: have you got any questions? No.

CLLR POPE: Was that clear? Good.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do please make a written submission, you know, when your thoughts have crystallised on New Forest East and Portsmouth.

CLLR POPE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you come to a different conclusion, please let us know.

CLLR POPE: Yes. You guys are the experts and I know how difficult the job is, so I may well not be able to come up with alternatives but I will have a go.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much indeed.

CLLR POPE: All right. Thank you very much.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Whenever you are ready, please feel free.

CLLR WINNINGTON: (Liberal Democrats Party) Okay, thank you. I am Matthew Winnington. I am Lib Dem, Portsmouth City Council, for Eastney and Craneswater ward, and I am speaking on behalf of Portsmouth Liberal Democrats today.

To start with, obviously Hampshire is the area that affects us, and we would like to say that we are content with - as with our regional party, national party - the boundaries outside Portsmouth.

Within the city, since last Thursday when the response was given by the Liberal Democrats, we have done a bit more consultation and discussion with residents and we just want one small change that we would like to see which is - as the Commission itself said that they were open to - to swap Baffins and Nelson wards, so instead of Nelson going into Portsmouth South, we have Baffins going into Portsmouth South instead. The reasons behind this are quite a few. There are quite a lot of community ties that at the moment are broken by Baffins being in a separate ward from Milton and Fratton. There is a small part of Baffins ward which is to the west of the railway line which is therefore isolated from the rest of the Baffins ward but at the moment is also isolated from over the road which is in Portsmouth South, which is the top of Fratton ward which ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would it be helpful if we brought up the map?

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes, that would be great. Yes, if that is able to ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That will help us.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because I remember the last time we had a long discussion about Baffins ward and ---

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes. Oh, you were there then as well five years ago, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I was there then and there was a road where Baffins used to be two wards and it was divided by a road.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes. That is right, yes. It seems like only yesterday.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

CLLR WINNINGTON: (After a pause) Okay, yes.

MR WINTER: You have a laser pointer on the lectern.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Ah, brilliant.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would it be possible to get even closer in to Baffins? Yes, that is good.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Okay. As I say, it is this area here that I am speaking about (indicating). Obviously, it does have the boundary with Copnor up here, but obviously that is a constituency boundary at the moment already, and so that would give the opportunity for that to be connected with that; and because of the nature of the housing around there, Copnor Road up here is more of a natural boundary than Copnor Road down here because it is very much sort of housing to housing in that area. So that is the north side.

On the south side down here, this boundary, as you can probably tell, is a really complicated boundary and literally there are a couple of occasions where you have next door neighbour houses are in different constituencies at the moment. This area here, you can see the name here Milton Common, Milton Common is in Baffins ward not in Milton ward, Milton ward is down here. So all of this area here is Milton, and actually the old Milton ward prior to 2002, and also the constituency boundary till 2010, was Tangier Road. So people in this area here regard themselves sometimes as Baffins itself and that has to be said; that has been since the ward has come into being, people regard themselves as Baffins more than they did before. However, certainly in the southern part of it they do regard themselves as Milton. You have Miltoncross School, which is here, and that is again not in Milton ward. You have Milton Cemetery, everything. It is all one sort of cohesive unit, but especially in this area there are enormous amounts of things to do. This part of the boundary actually backs onto St James's Psychiatric Hospital. So the boundary there is very, very opaque. There is development going on there at the moment where the only access to it is from Baffins but actually the development is in Milton ward. So it is an extremely fluid ward boundary there.

For community ties we believe that there is more commonality with Baffins with Milton than there is with Baffins and the rest of Portsmouth North. It always has been out on a limb because of its nature. It was a created ward in 2002, a brand new ward, and it therefore has been sort of half and half. But, as you can see, the railway line is there, so the vast majority of Baffins ward is actually separated from the rest of Portsmouth North by an industrial estate up here and a railway line there.

If we could go over to Nelson, so just to the left, at the moment of course the constituency boundary is between Charles Dickens and Nelson. The boundary there, as you can see, is far less squiggly; there are pretty straight lines. It goes down the middle of a road, it goes down the middle of a road, and it takes in all the housing on Washington Road here. In this area here there is blocks of flats - obviously, no block of flats is split in two. So the boundary between Nelson and Charles Dickens wards, though it does split a community, it is far cleaner. Also the nature of the housing here, they are much more set back from the roads, they are modern council housing, and you have not got the terraced housing that you get round at the bottom round Velder Avenue and Warren Avenue on the Milton/Baffins ward boundary. Sorry, going back to Milton and Baffins just very briefly, one of the roads that it goes down is actually extremely narrow, it is a very narrow sort of back street, but that is actually the ward boundary, which is why you have the impression of two people who live next door to each other are actually in different constituencies.

The other issue with Nelson is that the boundary with Hilsea ward, which is here, and also Copnor ward, though it does go down the middle of the road, these are suburban streets and again it is very similar. So Warren Road is here, which is the ward boundary, is no different than any other road. It is a very suburban road, it is not a main road at all, it is not a through road, but at the moment, obviously, they are in different wards. You would then be putting them in different constituencies which I do not think would help with their cohesion.

North End as well, North End goes into Copnor ward, Hilsea ward and Nelson ward. At the moment, that is all in one constituency. You would split up North End. North End, which already has a difficulty with representation because of the very nature, it is in different wards; there has not been a North End ward I think since the 1970s in the city because it is essentially in the middle and we have to take into account the areas at the edge of the city. So therefore North End, by its very nature, gets split up by wards; I do not think it would be best served by being split up by constituencies as well.

As for the point you did put in your initial reports, you said about it would unite more of Portsmouth Harbour into one constituency. There really is not that many people who live in Portsmouth Harbour and I would hope that the Commission would take more account of community ties rather than the harbour. Of course we are quite unusual in Portsmouth in that the whole of Portsmouth Harbour up to the high water mark is in Portsmouth as opposed to in Gosport or Fareham, which does cause some quite interesting little bits. So if you have any planning applications in any of those places on a jetty, they are decided by Portsmouth and not by ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Gosport.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Not by Gosport or Fareham, which is a slight quirk, but, yes. That is for reasons, obviously, being the Navy, and therefore all of the harbour is in Portsmouth city.

So really, yes, it comes down to community ties, very much the fact that Milton, Milton community --- So Milton Neighbourhood Forum covers the area that we looked at earlier, the Moorings Way area. They are very much - actually the Chair of Milton Neighbourhood Forum lives in Moorings Way - they regard themselves as Milton. They have Milton Common, which is very descriptive, and until 2010, from 1880, all of that area was kept in together.

If we could just go back over just to the west of Baffins ward, please. Yes, just there. And then the one other area that is - just going down to this other area here - here we have St Mary's Hospital - well, it used to be a hospital, it is now a health centre. There has also been an awful lot of building in this area here, which as you can see is in Milton ward, but it backs onto this area, which is the old workhouse, which has been housing for some years and there is a small estate there. Again, because you now have housing there, people's houses back on to each other, they are in different wards, at the moment in different constituencies. The way the development is happening both in Milton and Baffins, in both those areas, is very much merging those communities evermore, that instead of in the past you would have had St James's Psychiatric Hospital actually creating a bit of a gap between this part of Milton and this part, they are now coming together, more and more building is happening, and that in St Mary's is already happening, has already happened. Indeed, one of my colleagues, a councillor, he lives just about there - he is a Milton councillor so he does live in his ward - and then one of my other colleagues is a councillor of Baffins, lives all of 50 metres away from him there, and they are currently in different constituencies as well as being in different wards. So whereas up here the communities are very settled, there is no development. Development is going to be taking place up here. Actually, the development that will take place up here, if you did make this a constituency boundary, you would probably start getting melding across this area here because Tipner is an area of big developments and that is just waiting for a go-ahead, so that would create more of a melding between those communities as well.

I think that is it pretty much, yes. But, as I say, for the rest of the city, obviously we are happy. We welcome - and we really do welcome this time - that it is possible to have Portsmouth North and Portsmouth South as opposed to having to either argue for split wards or go east and west. We are really pleased the numbers work this time because, though some people were happy with the east and west proposals last time, I do not think it was any great enthusiasm, it was just the fact that the numbers worked. Obviously, this time you do have the choice between Baffins and Nelson and, as I say, I think I put across my case why we think it should be Baffins rather than Nelson into Portsmouth South.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any questions? (None) Can I just be clear? I think when you were talking about Nelson ward or a part of it, you talked about the suburban nature of - I think when you were describing that horizontal road.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is the whole ward suburban in nature or does it vary?

CLLR WINNINGTON: So the ward is a very mixed ward, in itself is one of the most mixed wards in the city. You have a council estate down here, which is the bulk of the Buckland council estate, as I say which is currently split, but Buckland has always been split. I mean, before the 2002 boundary change for the wards, the boundary used to go along here. This part is Buckland still as well. It has always been an area that has been split between wards and obviously has been split between constituencies because Charles Dickens and Nelson have always been in different constituencies.

This area here is very tightly packed terraced housing up in Stamshaw and Tipner, and then this area, North End, is still terraced because most of Portsmouth is terraced, but they are bigger houses but they are very suburban in nature, but, yes. So apart from the council estate, if you do not consider the council estate as suburban, the rest of the ward is very suburban. There is owner-occupation in the east, there is lots of renting in the west, but it very much has a completely suburban nature all across there.

The one thing I would say again about Baffins, so this bottom bit obviously all merges into one, but also the suburban nature of the east of the railway line part of Baffins is very much self-contained, it is certainly different from that part of Copnor. You do not get anything similar until you go over here, but it is very similar to, though there is a bit of a gap, this area here of suburban is very similar to this area of suburban Milton. Again for amenities and everything, people in Baffins go to Milton Market, they have their own area in here in Tangier Road. Tangier Road is used by obviously all the people around in this area. Both Baffins and Nelson are essentially suburban wards, but, yes, certainly Baffins has more of an affinity south, and because of the nature of Nelson, apart from the Buckland area, it has an affinity north.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: One last question if I may. I think in that last intervention you said that Nelson and Charles Dickens had always been in different constituencies.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Has that also been the case for Milton and Baffins?

CLLR WINNINGTON: I believe Nelson, when there was a Portsmouth Central or Portsmouth West (we are going back to before 1974 I think), there was I think Charles - they were not called Charles Dickens and Nelson then. I think Nelson was always there but it has shifted around a bit, but I think they were in the same constituency then but have not been obviously for more than 40 years. Whereas Baffins, Baffins was created in 2002, and before that, as I say, between 1880 and 2010, Tangier Road, because this was all in Milton ward, that was all in Copnor ward, the north bit was in Copnor ward, that was always - that was the constituency boundary. So two thirds ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That was the constituency for Portsmouth South?

CLLR WINNINGTON: Portsmouth South.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Yes, Portsmouth South, and then whether it was Portsmouth Langstone or Portsmouth North or anything like that, the north of Tangier Road was in Portsmouth North but all of the south of it was in Portsmouth South. As I say, until 2002 this area was in Milton ward, and there used to be, I think it was a Kingston Manor ward, which used to go across the railway line and do that, and that was always again in Portsmouth South because Tangier Road was always the boundary. Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

CLLR WINNINGTON: Okay. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very helpful. Our next speaker is not due until 3.40 pm. What time is it now? Twenty past three. We will adjourn for 20 minutes, or if she comes earlier, we will start again.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 3.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just let me tell you we are recording and videoing everything for the public record, so when you start your presentation, if you could just say who you are and where you are from just for the record, and then at the end of your presentation either I or one of my colleagues, or a member of the audience, might ask a point of clarification, but we are not going to have a debate.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: (MP Portsmouth South) Either way is fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Whenever you are ready.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: You would like me to go ahead?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: Are you ready?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to make this submission. I am Flick Drummond, the Member of Parliament for Portsmouth South. Can I also thank you for all your hard work over the many years that you have done this and particularly as you have had to do a lot in Portsmouth with changing the boundaries completely, which is much better now than it was.

I wish to support the recommendations of the Commission's report as they apply to the Portsmouth South constituency. At present, Portsmouth South is well below the limit dictated by the 5 per cent of the quota tolerance, but the Commission could bring the constituency back into range by adding a ward from it, from Portsmouth North, which was obviously quite different when it was going to be Portsmouth East and West. It is possible to do so without creating any kind of inconsistency as the character of Portsea Island is a compact, urban area, but it is necessary for your purposes to divide it somehow between the two parliamentary constituencies. The geography of Portsea Island dictates a choice of transfer, either the Nelson ward on the western side or Baffins ward on the eastern, which you have put in your report. I support the Commission's recommendation to transfer Nelson ward into Portsmouth South. Doing so brings together one constituency, the Buckland community, divided by the City Council ward boundaries, which is two constituencies at present and that is a very defined area. The Buckland community is a very defined area, it has got a distinct common character and outlook.

The proposal will also combine in one constituency all the maritime interests in the city, Portsmouth Naval Base and the ferry terminal for the Isle of Wight currently within Portsmouth South. However, the important naval establishment on Whale Island and the civilian docks are located in Nelson ward, and there is considerable common economic, social and legislative interest between the civilian and naval maritime sectors and it would best serve them being combined in Portsmouth South. I would therefore welcome and support the Commission's proposal which I think will unite a community in the best way. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Anybody got any questions? (None) I wonder if I might ask to draw on your expertise of local matters.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: Of course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We had heard that there is some coherence between the southern part of Baffins and Milton ward, and that also there is coherence between Nelson and say Hilsea, particularly around the North End part of the city.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: It is very much divided by roads, so Baffins, there is a little bit which is in Milton but it is only a very small bit. There is a much bigger bit in Nelson ward which is contiguous with --- The Buckland community is far bigger than the Baffins community.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: The road naturally, the Fratton Road divides, and up to London Road, divides much better than the roads over in Baffins, which is much more complicated.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, okay.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: I mean it is complicated when you are delivering leaflets or knocking on doors because one street is one type and one street is the other, but the way that you have done it now is much clearer than it would be if you had Baffins.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, that is very helpful. Thank you very much.

MRS FLICK DRUMMOND: Okay, brilliant. Thank you very much indeed for your time and all the work that you are doing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Our next speaker is at 5.00 pm, so we will adjourn until 5.00 pm, then we will decide what we will do.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 5 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are adjourned till 7 o'clock.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 7 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think we can draw today to a close. I look forward to seeing you all tomorrow morning.

The hearing adjourned until 9.00 am on Friday 28 October 2016

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MRS FLICK DRUMMOND MP

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CLLR LEWZEY

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M

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MS MORAN

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MR WHINERAY
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MR WINTER

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