

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

**PROCEEDINGS**

AT THE

**2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND**

HELD AT

**RNLI COLLEGE, WEST QUAY ROAD, POOLE BH15 1HZ**

ON

**TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2016**  
**DAY TWO**

Before:

**Ms Anita Bickerdike, The Lead Assistant Commissioner**

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83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW  
Telephone Number: 0203 585 4721/22

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Time Noted: 9 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, everyone, and welcome back to day two of the public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituencies in the South West. My name is Anita Bickerdike and I am an Assistant Commissioner with the Boundary Commission for England appointed to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the South West region.

Our first speaker today is Mr David Stokes. Thank you. If you would like to come to the lectern, please. Mr Stokes, the proceedings are being recorded for the purpose of making a record and then for publication later, so can I ask you to state your name and address, please?

MR STOKES: My name is David Stokes and my home address is 80 Bradpole Road, Bournemouth BH8 9NZ.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Stokes. If you would like to make your presentation, please.

MR STOKES: Thank you for allowing me to come this morning and make this presentation. As I say, my name is Dave Stokes. I was born and brought up in Bournemouth 55 years ago. I have lived most of my life here, apart from 12 years when I was overseas and a couple of years when I was away at college, so I consider myself a Bournemouth person. I have also had the great honour to stand for parliament on four occasions for the Labour Party, twice in Bournemouth East and twice in Bournemouth West, so I have a somewhat detailed knowledge of boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies since 2001, and I have been an active member of the party for 37 years in Bournemouth.

My submission is basically on two strands: firstly, my opposition to the proposed changes which have been published by the Boundary Commission. My particular area, I live at the moment in Strouden Park ward, and if we were to go along the Boundary Commission's proposed changes, I would be in a constituency that would be joined with Christchurch. While the whole of Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch have some affinity and close cooperation and we work very well together, the boundaries do not kind of permit that kind of change. It would be a bit bizarre dealing, as a constituency, on parliamentary matters with places that are not connected at the moment. What I would like to say is that the proposed existing boundaries are good enough. As I say, I have fought four elections on these boundaries, and the boundaries have always slightly changed, they have changed ever since I was involved in politics more than 30 years ago.

We have always had wards moving in and out between Bournemouth East and Bournemouth West. Indeed, the Labour Party's proposal to have Alderney added to Bournemouth West to bring up numbers there is one that I can fully agree with, because you basically have Bournemouth East, which is very good, it is a well thought out boundary at the moment, there is no problem with it, it encompasses areas that work closely together, and then Bournemouth West, with the addition of the three wards in Poole which have some kind of collective unity there, there does not seem to be any problem with that kind of thing.

So what I have come here today to say is strongly support a minimum change by adding Alderney to the existing Bournemouth West and keeping Bournemouth East the same, and very, very vehemently opposing the changes that have been put out by the Boundary Commission, because I think just dividing Bournemouth up as you have asked to do or you have suggested to do just does not make any sense, it really does break up a community that is well organised at the moment. For the sake of the MPs, they work on working within communities that are fairly homogeneous at the moment.

I would like to ask that the changes be in line with the Labour Party recommendations that I believe you have received yesterday.

On one point, on the naming of the constituency, notwithstanding Labour's point in their submission 4.5.1 on names of constituencies, I can see no reason why we cannot change Bournemouth West to Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley. I think that is quite sensible. Having three of the wards come in from Poole, we have got to give some recognition to that. Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Stokes. Thank you for attending and giving your representations.

MR STOKES: Yes, okay. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: (After a pause) There are no more speakers, so I intend to adjourn the hearing until 10.15 am. Just be aware that there is a test fire alarm at 9.45 am. The hearing will recommence at 10.15 am.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 10.15 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back. I am afraid we have no more speakers. No more speakers have arrived or booked in since the last adjournment. Our next speaker is not booked until 11.40 am, therefore I will adjourn the hearing until 11 o'clock. We will recommence the hearing at 11 o'clock.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 11 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back to the public hearing. We have no more speakers booked in, nobody has arrived since the last adjournment. Our next speaker is not booked until 11.40 am, so I will adjourn the hearing until 11.40 am.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 11.40 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, Mr Clark. I understand that you are happy to speak earlier than your booked slot.

CLLR CLARK: Yes, that is correct, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Clark, we will be recording the proceedings for the purpose of making an official record which will then be published in due course along with all of the other representations and written documentation that the Commission receives. For that purpose, could I ask you to give your name and address, please?

CLLR CLARK: Yes. My name is Cllr Ian Clark. My address is 19 Cucklington Gardens, Bournemouth BH9 3QR.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Clark.

CLLR CLARK: I am a councillor for Throop & Muscliff ward in Bournemouth.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your presentation, please.

CLLR CLARK: Thank you. When I first saw these proposals, it took me a long time to work out what was actually the constituency that I was likely to be in. When I actually realised that it went from Wallisdown in the west to Highcliffe in the east, it reminded me of a German sausage shape - and it does go sort of that sort of shape - and certainly I was very surprised by how the constituency had been framed. There has been no historical connection between Christchurch and Bournemouth, certainly in a political way, for a very long time. The Stour river that cuts between Bournemouth and Christchurch is a very good, is a very logical boundary, and it would be very, very difficult to actually have a constituency that crosses that border. When I was speaking to members of the public it was very difficult to explain how this proposed new

constituency would work coming from Wallisdown, Winton and across to Moordown, my ward of Throop & Muscliff and Strouden Park, and then with all the Christchurch wards going from Hurn right across to Highcliffe. I am sure Christchurch members would also be surprised to be included in a constituency named North Bournemouth and Christchurch.

The current Bournemouth East would seem to be a perfect fit for the requirements of the new boundaries with I think around about 75,000 members, constituents, which is the required amount. Bournemouth West would only, according to my calculations, need one extra ward from Poole to also make the 75,000 figure. For me, it is very difficult to see how a constituency that has been so well focused on Bournemouth with having two MPs for such a long time that they know that they are looking after Bournemouth and the residents of Bournemouth, and when they are in parliament they are speaking just on behalf of Bournemouth, if we had this proposed constituency, it just muddies the water when you are speaking about, "I am representing North Bournemouth and Christchurch", it is not just so clear for the public to understand. It is really important that the public have an affinity with their constituency and can see exactly where they belong, and it is a lot easier for the constituency to get along with - certainly at the moment - Bournemouth Council. It is quite clear who the constituency belongs to and it is easier for the MPs, for the public to speak to the MPs. If we had the proposal, I do not know where the constituency would be based with the central office, whether it would be in Christchurch or North Bournemouth or a bit of both, and it makes things just a lot more difficult.

As I say, the current Bournemouth East constituency is well-defined and understood by all its residents, and is well-connected to the local council area and the MP. I do not understand why - because I understand there is two, the whole of the South West of England needs to reduce by just two constituencies - Bournemouth needs to be cut up and made into three or four constituencies just to fit into this mathematical constituency.

Looking at historical parts of Bournemouth, one of the oldest parts of Bournemouth is Kinson where I grew up, and Kinson would not be in any Bournemouth constituency, it would be, I believe it is with Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson, so it would actually have three names which is I think only two other constituencies in the country have that. Kinson is the oldest part of Bournemouth and I believe the smugglers were the oldest, were going back into the 17th century. But Kinson is looked after really well, it is a deprived area, West Howe, and the Bournemouth area has put in special measures to look after our two most deprived areas, which is Boscombe and West Howe. We wonder - and my fellow Kinson councillors wonder - whether this would be the case if it was under a separate constituency of Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson.

The other thing I would like to say is, looking from the Christchurch point of view, I am not speaking on their behalf, but it would always be more logical for them to fit in with New Milton but I understand that that is not possible under the present scheme

because they do not come into the South West of England. I believe it is done under the EU areas of boundaries, South West England, but I mean Christchurch would fit much better with New Milton and other parts in my opinion.

So I am against these proposals and hope that the Boundary Commission can look again at these proposals and come back next year with revised proposals looking at hopefully putting Bournemouth East and West back more or less into the shape they are at the moment. I would like to thank you for this chance of speaking.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Cllr Clark, thank you very much for coming to talk to me. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions for clarification from the floor?

CLLR CLARK: Yes, certainly.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any questions? No. Thank you. Thank you for attending and thank you for your representations.

CLLR CLARK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: (After a pause) Mr Major, if you would like to go to the lectern and state your name and address, please.

MR MAJOR: (Bournemouth West Conservative Association) My name is Major, John Major, not Sir. My home address is 24 Homewest House, 35 Poole Road, Bournemouth BH4 9DJ, but I am here this morning in my capacity as President of the Bournemouth West Conservative Association. Their address is 135 Hankinson Road, Bournemouth BH9 1HR. It is in the name of the association that I have handed in a formal response to yourselves for consideration.

Madam Chairman, I do not intend to either repeat that that is in the report, nor to repeat the arguments that we heard yesterday well articulated from a whole number of Members of Parliament, but what I would like to do, having benefited from hearing others preceding me, is perhaps draw to the Commission's attention certain other aspects of where we are now.

In summary, first of all, of the implications - and I am purely going to be talking about Bournemouth and, in particular, Bournemouth West - as Mr Clark has just indicated, Bournemouth, if these proposals were implemented, would be reduced to one full-time MP, one with a passing interest and one with very little interest. We would see that unfortunate mixture of high-density urban living bolted on to county-style constituencies, and in particular in the Broadstone, Ferndown case, the two Kinson wards and Redhill would be very much a minority. They will be bringing something in, a different element

entirely. It would introduce stresses and demands of need that would not be compatible with the rest of the constituency.

Another feature, I would like to just briefly summarise the economic position of Bournemouth because, if we run through that, it will give you an idea of not only what happens in Bournemouth but what people do, where they work, how they live, their travel to work, and everything else all follows from that.

The principal employers, the sectors in Bournemouth, are - no particular order - tourism, financial services, higher education, foreign language schools, arts and animation, and it has the fastest-growing digital economy in the UK. Madam Chairman, those are not replicated in Christchurch, Highcliffe, Ferndown or Broadstone. That is a background to an urban economy that is thriving and is developing, and if we take the rest of the urban conurbation with Poole, whose industry is a little bit more traditional, they complement each other. Bournemouth by itself is probably the largest economic generator for Dorset, but take the two together, I would suggest that after Bristol you have probably got the strongest private sector-led economy in the South West. That deserves more than one full-time MP because those industries, if you think about them - tourism, financial services, higher education - they need a voice, they need a strong voice, and it is better if that is done by breadth of experience, practical knowledge, not a passing interest.

Let me just deal with one sector alone as a "for example". It generates for the local economy on a working day approximately £1 million per day. It employs, directly employs, in excess of 3,000 people. I am talking about the two universities: there is the Bournemouth University and Arts Bournemouth. As an example - we will not waste time drawing your attention to the map - the main campus is right on the borough boundaries of Poole and Bournemouth but firmly in Bournemouth West. The whole university sector at the moment is all within Bournemouth West. The university campus is on the borough borders, so it has got Talbot Woods and Branksome, Bournemouth West ward on one side, it has got Wallisdown to its north, and it is in Branksome East - you heard a great deal about Branksome East yesterday. That element, Bournemouth University would be moved under the proposals to the Poole constituency where it has never been, it has never been attached to Poole. The town centre of Bournemouth, currently all in Bournemouth West, has a business centre for the university, various other office buildings - administration, research and nursing faculty - and approximately 5,000 first-year students in high-rise halls of residence. Students love it, town centre, wow! They will become part of Bournemouth South, different constituency. The research units, administration units, nursing faculty, are in a different constituency under the proposal to the campus.

That still leaves the students themselves, the second and third-year students. They have just left home; they are living by themselves in houses of multioccupation (or HMOs as they are now referred to). They are located in wards that start almost across

the road from the main campus in Wallisdown west and Winton East, and you can never be too sure how many there are because, unlike those that go into the halls of residence, the university actually gets them onto the registers. But these are free agents, they come back, they are going into their second year, so they really are free at last, do they vote here? Do they register to vote here? Do they register ...? We know that, because they are blind to the statistics, but they are there, they have an impact on their community. But it is ludicrous to suggest that they should be transferred and the problems, particularly the long-term residents living adjacent to them in these communities, they are so close to the university but they are to be transferred to a constituency that stretches right over to the Highcliffe and the Hampshire borders. What an alien suggestion.

The Christchurch constituency, if I am not mistaken, has the highest or oldest demographic profile of any mainland UK constituency and we are going to bolt on to it what, potentially, 15,000 students, and the environment that they create, total contradiction, and never mind the geography, the distance, the lack of connection as again Mr Clark has already referred to that and you heard reference to it yesterday.

Students are also to be found - not in the same numbers - in the southern part of the Redhill ward. Redhill is to be transferred - it is sort of directly above, over on your side, Madam Chairman. The Redhill ward is to be transferred to Ferndown. What does Ferndown know about students? What would the MP for that area? I mean he is having enough irritant with these three alien wards already bolted onto the patch from Bournemouth, but students? No. No. I just give you that as one example of the problems. I can understand also the Boundary Commission, the people working away, looking at numbers, they are looking at maps, the locations, such as I have identified, I can understand. How do they know they are there? They probably do not. I accept that and respect that, and that is the value of consultation, but I just ask that to be taken into account.

But to conclude on the university, it would mean that their administrators would possibly have to turn to four separate MPs, dependent upon what their interests and what the problems are or what they need, what level of consultation, what public involvement, et cetera, et cetera, four. At the moment they have one and they have a good working relationship with that MP, which is benefiting not only themselves but it is benefiting the town, I would like to think, because we are seeing from the university the spin-off. I mentioned the digital economy, this is one of the specialist areas that is going through the university structure. Hollywood recruits from Bournemouth for its animators. We have a great industry there. We also need to have a knowledgeable MP who can articulate that, can provide the links. Let us not fracture it.

Now a little bit of history; it starts personally with me and will lead me to two points. It was in 1969 that somebody knocked on my door, whom I knew, invited me to join the local Conservative Association. He said, "Come on the committee. You don't really



have to do anything”, and I have not stopped since, but there are two things that have emerged over those many years meeting people on doorsteps, et cetera et cetera, no matter where they are - because my formative years were then in London - two things. It does not really matter where they are - people say this in Bournemouth, they say this in London and they will say it anywhere else - if a new MP is being introduced, they have got a problem, “What does the MP know about me? What does he know about my area? Does he understand?” What they are really saying is, “Does the MP really share my experiences? Can he comprehend?” May I suggest, Madam Chairman, that some of the proposals as they affect no less than five of the Bournemouth West wards, the answer to that must be, well, it is doubtful, because he is busy watching sheep roll over the cattle grids from the New Forest on his eastern flank or he is dealing with the retirement community somewhere else. It is a conflict of interest. That question could not be answered and it is a very, very important one.

Another, which I actually put in this report, in advance of a ruling from the High Court only a couple of weeks back referring to the referendum, the phrase I put in, that people will say, “Nobody cares about us round here. We are just a political football, we are used to make up numbers”. Let me turn to the transfer wards very briefly. Alderney ward, you heard a great deal about it, you actually heard about it from Robert Syms the Poole MP, which was very useful. He said, referring to both Alderney and Branksome East, these are really Bournemouth wards and rightly so, they happen to be in the borough of Poole, but their connections, their communications and everything else, is to Bournemouth, absolutely right. Alderney first became Bournemouth West in 1983. After 14 years it was transferred, making up numbers, to Mid Dorset, and then returned to Bournemouth West. To suggest that it goes to the Poole association, with whom it has had no connection now for over 30 years, is illogical. You can see on the map, it is just along this famous Wallisdown Road - we heard that yesterday - it is a main arterial road straight into the centre of Bournemouth, it is closer to the centre of Bournemouth. The only possible exception could be the little south-west corner up in the top there, but even there, looking at this map, it is more connected to Bournemouth. So that is Alderney, but those people would certainly feel kicked about, the long-term residents there. They are happy with their existing MP as reflected at the last election. They do not want to be moved around making up numbers, they want to be respected.

Branksome East, now that is even closer; that is the ward with the university campus just in the corner there. You can just see the words “Talbot Heath” kicking in there, right on the borough boundary. In fact the entire ward is closer to the centre of Bournemouth, as you can see, than it is to the centre of Poole. This is a relic of course of history, because Bournemouth is the new kid on the block between Poole and Christchurch, two very old, ancient locations, and here comes this new kid muscling in between them, but of course it has muscled in between them and then spread out a little bit. The people in Branksome East, they think they are in Bournemouth: they work in Bournemouth, they shop in Bournemouth. Sitting in the room yesterday was one of the Branksome East councillors, he considers himself a Bournemouth person. So that

political football, that would be big time, to move them back, since 1983 and quite unnecessary.

Kinson. I am grateful for Cllr Clark's reference to Kinson, not only its history as one of the oldest communities, it has actually a natural boundary - if you like, it is the northern and certainly the north-western boundary for Bournemouth - it has got a river, it has got green belt. The people there - no, it is not an affluent area, there are pockets of quite comfortable residents, do not get me wrong - but these are people that work in Bournemouth, they look to Bournemouth, they need Bournemouth. But within that ward, as Cllr Clark has indicated, is an area of social need, second only to Boscombe within Bournemouth. Boscombe itself is certainly the most deprived part of Dorset. Quite how parts of Kinson, the West Howe area of Kinson figure into that, I would not like to say. However, I would also say that it has been an integral part of the Bournemouth West constituency ever since it was created. There is a major charity working in the area which is so proud of its connection. The Conservative MP is its patron. They are now on the third MP, the first two were sort of 25/26 years each, so actually they are great survivors, Bournemouth MPs, are they not? Such is that connection, now we are going to sever that. The Boundary Commission proposes that they go to Ferndown.

Another aspect of this is that, for example, there is total separation between the business community, which is in the town centre or what would become Bournemouth South, and this area of need in Kinson. At the moment, connections are established between the business community funding charitable projects via the MP into Kinson, valuable work, vital work, terribly important, complementing the work of the council, and it is fine, that is what it is all about, but that connection would go without the MP. It is not one, but they will be two constituencies apart, because we would have this great sort of thing leaping into this narrow point from Christchurch as well, it will be erroneous.

Madam Chairman, in summing-up, I do have to say with disappointment - whereas five years ago I stood here and debated a reasoned amendment, little bit of a tidying up to the Boundary Commission which they accepted - in this instance I do have to recommend total rejection of the proposals. Quite simply, to quote the Boundary Commission's own work, Bournemouth East requires no adjustment to make the numbers - I quite agree. Bournemouth West only requires small modification - I so agree, that small modification, the transfer of the Poole Branksome West ward, and it is a small ward, it is only a two-member ward at the moment, immediately connected to and attached to Branksome East. Part of the ward for borough council purposes is already part of Branksome East, so we have the connection. Bring that into Bournemouth West, otherwise the shape and construction and figuration of Bournemouth West remains unchanged, just with the addition of that you have an electorate of some 77,000. Madam Chairman, I commend that recommendation to the Boundary Commission, and thank you so much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for coming to speak to me and thank you also for the written document, which will be very useful as myself and my assistant colleague, who is also an Assistant Commissioner, will be reviewing all of these written submissions and also the tapes from all of the oral submissions. Are there any questions?

MR MAJOR: Go on, Cllr Clark.

CLLR CLARK: You have covered everything very well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It appears not.

MR MAJOR: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for attending and for your representations.

MR MAJOR: Not at all. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for the opportunity.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. (After a pause) We have no more speakers booked now, so I will adjourn at this point until 12.45 pm just in case we have any people who want to come and speak and they have not yet booked. The hearing will recommence at 12.45 pm.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 12.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is now 12.45 pm. We have no more speakers now booked. I intend to close the hearing now until 2.15 pm.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 2.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. I am resuming the hearing. We have no people who have booked in to speak this afternoon and nobody who has expressed an interest to speak who has just walked in, so I will adjourn the hearing now until 3.15 pm and review the situation at that time. Thank you.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 3.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. It is 3.15 pm. We have no booked attenders, no one else has been in to see us, so I am going to now adjourn the hearing until 3.50 pm and review the situation at that point.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 3.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. Welcome back to the hearing. We have no more speakers booked. It is ten to four. I will adjourn until 4 o'clock and my intention is to close the hearing at 4 o'clock if we have no speakers, but at the moment the hearing is adjourned until 4.00 pm.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is 4 o'clock and I intend now to close the second day of the public hearing in Poole. We have no more attenders. I would like to thank the RNLI College for accommodating us and providing the support for us over the last two days. Thank you. I will close the hearing now at 4 o'clock.

**C**

CLLR CLARK, 4, 6, 11

**M**

MR MAJOR, 6, 11

**S**

MR STOKES, 2, 3

**T**

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12